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A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF EDUCATION IN
EARLY BLACKFOOT INDIAN CULTURE AND
ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIAN SCHOOLS

by

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A THESIS

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "A Historical Survey of Education in Early Blackfoot Indian Culture and Its Implications for Indian Schools", submitted by Kevin J. Carr in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

ABSTRACT

The belief is frequently expressed that the status of Canada's Native Peoples can best be improved through their integration into the broader streams of Canadian society. It is held that one of the principal means of achieving this will be through schooling. For a system of formal education to be successful in such a task, it must take into consideration the ethnic, historical and cultural backgrounds of the people concerned. A need for knowledge is evident.

The purpose of this thesis was to research one small part of the broad, composite picture of North American Indian culture. Specifically focusing on the tribes of the Blackfoot Confederacy it examined their cultural history with reference to their primitive modes of educating their young.

Defining education as the entire process by which a culture transmits itself through time, the thesis initially established the general cultural patterns of the Blackfoot.

Education is rooted in the social organization of any society and all societies are, in some way, made up of a relatively large, enduring social group, sharing a common culture and continually recruiting new members from the younger generation; and all have a necessary

functional differentiation of occupational roles. Based on this theory, primitive Blackfoot education was regarded as preparation for group membership and preparation for specialized roles. Within this framework, the various agencies and processes that functioned in these two capacities were the basis of research consideration.

A survey of the period of Blackfoot history characterized by the arrival of the white man followed. It was found that the early period of the fur trader and missionary had great cultural implications for the Blackfoot, but little direct educational significance. However, the period of white settlement marked by the beginning of reservation life for the Indians was of great educational importance. It was at this time that a white system of formal schooling was imposed on the Indians with resulting problems and difficulties.

The study concluded with an analysis of the data presented for the purpose of discerning what had happened to primitive patterns of Indian education in the years following the arrival of the white man, and to establish some of the possible causes of the difficulties encountered. These conclusions were then examined as having possible implications for those concerned with Indian education at the present and in the future.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE PURPOSE AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY	1
The Purpose	1
Statement of the Purpose	1
Importance of the Study	1
Formal Indian schooling	2
Necessity for consideration of	
cultural variables	6
Importance of primitive education	7
Need for research	10
The Design of the Study	12
Historical Perspective	12
Research Procedures	14
II. ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY	19
Delimitations of the Study	19
Historical Delimitations	20
Significance of the introduction	
of the horse	24
The Horse Culture Period	24
Geographical and Cultural Delimitations	26
Definition of Education	29
Education as the Transmission of Culture . . .	31
Basic Components of Social Organization . . .	32
III. PLAINS INDIAN CULTURE	35

CHAPTER	PAGE
Material Culture	35
Subsistence	36
Shelter	37
Domestic Animals	37
Crafts	39
Weapons	41
Social Organization	42
Political Units	42
Tribes	42
Bands	43
Authority	45
Familial Relations	47
Marriage	47
Relatives	49
Children	49
Community Structures	50
Societies	50
Social rank	53
Social customs	54
Supernaturalism	55
Supernatural Power	55
Sources	56
Methods of Obtaining Power	56
Dreams	57

CHAPTER	PAGE
Medicine bundles	58
Sale of power	58
The Sun Dance	59
Summary	60
IV. BLACKFOOT EDUCATION: PREPARATION FOR GROUP	
MEMBERSHIP	62
The Aims of Blackfoot Education	63
The Cultural Ideal For Men	64
The Cultural Ideal For Women	66
Imitation	66
Imitation as Stimulated, Directed Practice . .	69
Methods of Stimulating Imitation of	
Approved Activities	72
Public recognition	73
Praise and ridicule	77
Privileges of maturity	81
Summary	84
Discipline	85
Absence of Physical Punishment	86
Functioning Disciplinary Pressures	87
Relatives	88
Tribal Elders	89
The age-graded societies	91
The supernatural	92

CHAPTER	PAGE
The role of the parents	95
Summary	96
Educational Function of Names	97
Ridicule Through Naming	98
Names as Prestige Rewards	99
The Transference of Personalities	101
Summary	103
Storytelling	103
Transmitting Tribal History	105
Stimulating Self-Development	106
Authority for Cultural Beliefs and Practices .	108
Explanatory Content	109
Conclusion	110
Vision Quest and the Guardian Spirit	111
The Educative Function of Supernaturalism . .	113
Acquiring Supernatural Power	114
Dreams	114
Preparation for the dream experience	116
The nature of the dream	117
Education associated with the dream	119
Failure to experience a dream	119
Summary	120
V. BLACKFOOT EDUCATION: PREPARATION FOR	
SPECIALIZED ROLES	121

CHAPTER	PAGE
Roles of a Mundane Nature	122
A Chief	122
Specialists In Skills and Crafts	122
The Men's Societies	124
The War Leader	126
The Blackfoot Medicine Man	128
Definition of the Term Medicine	129
Importance of the Medicine Man	130
The Role of the Medicine Man	131
The Education of the Medicine Man	135
Attracting candidates	136
Training for priestly functions	137
Training for the functions of a shaman	144
Preparation for doctoring	153
Summary	156
VI. THE COMING OF THE WHITE MAN	157
The Prereservation Period	157
The Fur Traders	158
Trading activities on the Saskatchewan	160
American trading activities	163
Impact on Blackfoot culture	165
Education	167
The Missionaries	168
Reservation Times	172

CHAPTER	PAGE
Blackfoot Treaties	173
Blackfoot conception of the treaty	173
Treaties with reference to education	175
Change in the Blackfoot way of life	176
Formal Blackfoot Schooling	177
Organization and structure	178
School--community relationships	182
Curriculum developments	187
Finance	191
Physical facilities and pupil personnel	192
Summary	197
VII. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS	200
Summary	200
Orientation to the Study	201
Education defined	201
Basic components of social organization	202
Preparation for Group Membership	202
Language	203
The group ideal	205
Imitation	206
Discipline	207
Naming	207
Storytelling	208
The supernatural	208

CHAPTER	PAGE
Preparation for Specialized Roles	209
Proficiency in common behavior	
expectations	209
Men's societies	209
War party leader	210
Medicine man	210
The Coming of the White Man	211
The fur traders	211
Changes in the Blackfoot way of life	212
Early educative efforts	212
Blackfoot treaties	213
Formal schooling	214
Conclusions and Implications	217
Blackfoot Acculturation	218
Incidental acculturation	219
Deliberate acculturation	219
Acculturation Through Formal Schooling	222
Effectiveness of primitive education	222
Group ideals	223
Group participation	224
Enculturation	226
Equal Education Opportunities	228
Total equality is discriminatory	229
Special educational opportunities	230
Implications for Indian Education	230

CHAPTER	PAGE
Language	230
Attitudes	234
Discipline	236
Motivation	237
Leadership	239
Code of conduct	241
Stories	243
Summary	244
BIBLIOGRAPHY	246

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
I. Reported Schools and Enrolment on the Blackfoot Reservations for the Years 1918, 1928 and 1936	195
II. Enrolment of Indian Pupils in Alberta Schools Classified by Grade or Type of Training, School Years 1962-63, 1963-64 .	198

CHAPTER I

THE PURPOSE AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The position of Canada's Native Peoples with reference to the over-all structure of society in this country has, in recent years, become an acute and well publicized problem. In addition to scholarly works, the popular press is continually bringing to the attention of the general populace the deep-rooted difficulties associated with the present status of the Indians and Eskimos. Basic to a consideration of these problems is an understanding of the Indian and his culture.

I. THE PURPOSE

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study is to fill in one small part of the broad, composite picture of North American Indian culture. It is an attempt to examine the cultural history of a particular group of Indian People with specific reference to their primitive modes of educating their young. The focus of consideration will be the Plains Indians collectively referred to as the Blackfoot Confederacy.

Importance of the Study

Frequently the belief expressed is that the solution to the "Indian Problem" lies in the complete integration of

these peoples into the broader streams of Canadian society. It is constantly held that one of the principal means of achieving this will be through systems of formal schooling. The study of Murray and Rosalie Wax, in association with Robert Dumont, points out that education has been one of the constant concerns in the historical interaction between Indians and Whites and indicates the expectations held with reference to its function:

From the time of the Spanish and French missionaries until the present day, the Whites have been concerned with educating the Indians. Usually, this has implied not simply the imparting of literacy, technical skills, or academic lore, but also the transmutation of his culture and personality - from a heathen into a Christian, from an economic collectivist into an individualist, and, in the case of the nomadic groups, from a hunter into a settled and diligent farmer.¹

Formal Indian schooling. Formal education, then, has long been looked upon as the means for transforming the way of life of these people into patterns conforming to those of white society. However, formal Indian education is an area now being subjected to public re-examination in the light of the expenditure of millions of dollars of public funds every year. Education for Indians has existed

¹Murray L. Wax, Rosalie H. Wax and Robert V. Dumont, "Formal Education in an American Indian Community," Social Problems, Vol. II, No. 4 (Spring, 1964), p. 1.

since early reservation times and, in the case of Alberta, since before the founding of the province,² yet the meager results do not seem to justify the time, energy and money devoted to it by the governments and churches. Indicative of the general recognition of the lack of progress are such recently published statements as the following:

The fastest-growing group in Canada, our Indian population, is said to be "in transition," a polite description implying that it is only a matter of time until Indians emerge from no-man's land, miraculously modern and ready for full membership in a white society. The truth is that the gap between our world and theirs is far wider now than it was almost four centuries ago when European settlement of Canada began.³

That the gap between Indian culture and White culture still exists and is narrowing very slowly, if at all, is an opinion also expressed by many other authorities. The following serves as an example of the type of statement frequently encountered:

²John W. Tims, "Calgary's Appeal on Behalf of Calgary's Children of the Plains" (Calgary: n. p., 1909), p. 10. (In pamphlet form at the Glenbow Archives, Calgary, Alberta.); Lucien M. Hanks, Jr., and Jane R. Hanks, Tribe Under Trust (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), pp. 26-27.

³Jeannine Locke, "Outcasts in Their Own Land," Star Weekly, Sept. 19-25, 1964, p. 2.

The task of adjusting their Stone Age civilization to confrontation by the twentieth century has moved so slowly as to be called a "national disgrace" by a national association devoted to native welfare.⁴

Referring more specifically to education the Hanks' study of the Blackfoot concludes that "few Indians have been able to alter their lot through education", and further explains the situation in the following terms:

After a maximum of eleven years in school the children have nominally completed eight grades. Actually few Blackfoot have even the most elementary knowledge of subjects commonly taught in the village grammar schools. Their training is insufficient for graduation into higher white schools but it is considered adequate on the reserve.⁶

There are also studies which indicate that, in general, the Indian child when in school attains a much lower level of scholastic achievement than the child of white parents.⁷ In addition, there have been other research

⁴"Canada's Native People," The Royal Bank of Canada Monthly Letter, Vol. 47, No. 2 (February, 1966), p. 1.

⁵Hanks and Hanks, op. cit., p. 108.

⁶Ibid., pp. 164-65.

⁷L. Madison Coombs, Ralph E. Kron, E. Gordon Collister, and Kenneth E. Anderson, The Indian Child Goes To School (Washington: United States Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1958).

investigations showing that the Indian even differs from the White with regard to the attitudes held with reference to the value of formal schooling.⁸

There is, then, a general and long standing acceptance of the belief that if Indians are to be subjected to a process of acculturation that will ultimately result in their becoming functioning members of society as a whole, formal education must play an important role. There would also appear to be widespread recognition of the fact that problems exist and that formal schooling will not adequately perform the function assigned to it until some of the long standing barriers to effective Indian education have been removed.

Naturally there are differing opinions as to how this should be accomplished. Basic to all efforts, however, should be the acceptance of the fact that the aims of Indian education must be founded on a process of deliberate acculturation.

⁸H. Zentner, "Attitudes Towards Graduation Among Indian and Non-Indian Students," The Alberta Journal of Educational Research, Vol. VIII, No. 4 (December, 1962).

Necessity for consideration of cultural variables.

For formal education to be successful in establishing such a system it must take into consideration the ethnic, historical and cultural backgrounds of the people concerned. The Blackfoot scholar, John Ewers, points out the futility of attempting to plan any course of social action without regard for the Indian's own habits and desires.⁹ This is especially significant with respect to formal schooling. The Indians themselves recognize the need for this approach. In their brief to the Cameron Royal Commission on Education in 1960 the Indian Association of Alberta states:

With the Indian children there is a special need of examining the suitability and adequacy of the subjects offered, especially in relation to their non-English speaking backgrounds, and their Indian heritage and Band living, completely different from any of the immigrant people. Their progress is often slow in school. We recognize there are other factors in slow progress and difficulty in fitting into school, but stress there is not sufficient recognition of the ethnic qualities, history and mode of life of the Bands.¹⁰

⁹John C. Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), p. 318.

¹⁰Indian Association of Alberta, "Brief to the Alberta Government Education Commission by the Indian Association of Alberta" (brief submitted to the Alberta Royal Commission on Education, 1960), p. 3. (mimeographed.)

There are, then, a number of cultural factors that must be considered as essential to the planning of Indian educational programs.

Importance of primitive education. One area worthy of such attention is that relating to the primitive educational processes that functioned in the social life of the Indian peoples. It seems reasonable to assume that the proper point for departure in attempting to understand the nature and problems of Indian education lies not in what it became but in what it had been. Educators may have been missing an important approach to the task of integration and acculturation in not giving greater attention to the traditional means by which the Indian child received the preparation necessary for adult life in the society to which he belonged.

There may seem to be little connection between primitive Indian education and the pedagogical systems of modern times. However, modern education is not something entirely different from the primitive type. It is characterized by more institutionalized complexities, but many basic aims are roughly similar. By examining the primitive Indian society, which had no formal school system, it is possible to establish a fairly complete picture of what these people did to ensure the transmittal of their

traditions, beliefs, ideals, aspirations, and skills to the younger generation. Through a study of such school-free efforts a clearer conception of the problems modern education encounters with reference to these children may be established. This is especially significant since there is evidence to support the conclusion that aspects of the old pattern may still be operative, contributing to the persistence of aboriginal cultural concepts.

The Hanks' study encountered this with reference to the Indians' vacillating interest in work opportunities:

When we tried to find out the reason for this we immediately encountered the Blackfoot attitudes toward industriousness and thrift, which seem related to the cultural past when people worked furiously for a brief period and then settled into the leisure of contented enjoyment.¹¹

In addition, generosity was still practiced according to the cultural standards of prereservation times:

To most Blackfoot Indians wealth is not so important in terms of accumulation of property as for the prestige and security that can be acquired by giving it away.¹²

Indications are that far from wanting to reject these

¹¹Hanks and Hanks, op. cit., p. xv.

¹²Ibid., p. 86.

cultural concepts the Indian wants to retain many of his old ways. One recent author sums up this attitude in the following terms:

The Indian desperately wants equality, but unlike the Negro in the U.S. South he doesn't want integration. He wants to remain an Indian and retain the values of Indian culture.¹³

He further records a Native Indian leader as stating:

I'm an Indian and I want to be one and no matter how much they try they can't make me over into a white man first. I'm an Indian and that is how they've got to take me.¹⁴

The fact remains, then, that generations of Indians have passed since the coming of the white man and the Indian still remains a person ignorant in many of the skills necessary for integration into modern society. Moreover, in many ways he remains Indian in outlook. For a long period of time there was no official change in educational policy to meet this complication. Those who advocated education as the chief means of achieving integration merely urged more schools and better teachers.¹⁵

¹³Ian Adams, "The Indians: An Abandoned And Dispossessed People," The Edmonton Journal Weekend Magazine, Vol. 15, No. 31 (1965), p. 2.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁵Hanks and Hanks, op. cit., p. 51.

Recently recognition has been given to the fact that a new approach to the problem is needed. One author states that:

To integrate them now requires the kind of patient effort that has no appeal to the modern imagination. As a start, we need to know these strangers with whom we live.¹⁶

Need for research. John Barr, in a recent series of articles, indicates how this new approach must be applied in the field of education, and suggests the function the various social sciences must perform in guiding attempts to develop school programs that are more suited to the needs and backgrounds of the Indian peoples.

The answer to ignorance is education - or so the prevailing wisdom tells us. But while "education" certainly is the answer to inadequate Indian skills, the problem is by no means simply solved. A whole new approach to education in this province, geared to the needs of a culturally different minority, is the top priority, and the province has been striving mightily to forge one.

.

Of course, such education costs a great deal of money and demands an open minded approach to teaching. We are only beginning to bring scientific methods and the insights of the sociologist and anthropologist to bear on the problem.¹⁷

¹⁶Locke, op. cit., p. 4.

¹⁷John J. Barr, "The Indians: out of the bush and into the schools," Edmonton Journal, Wed., Nov. 23, 1966, p. 4.

Mr. Barr need not have limited himself to mentioning only sociology and anthropology, but could have included all the social sciences. Each is capable of making contributions that will increase our total understanding of the Indian peoples and the problems they face. Such knowledge will be the basis for the educational policies and efforts of the future.

To attempt to understand or come to know the Indian and his culture is no easy task. It is a broad picture that needs to be filled in a piece at a time. Too frequently all Indians have been lumped together and regarded as one people. "It is only recently that we have begun to realize that there is no homogenous Indian problem to be relieved by a single set of regulations."¹⁸

It is necessary to recognize that there existed and still exist different Indian cultures, and research methods must be applied to each of them as being unique and distinct in many ways.

For such an approach to be successful there must be an awareness of the falacy in the concept that pictures the Indian as an ignorant, uneducated savage living in a type of cultural vacuum. It must be accepted that many

¹⁸"Before The White Man Came," Star Weekly, Sept. 19-25, 1964, p. 7.

Indians had a fully developed culture and a system of education, and that this must not be overlooked by those concerned with the study of Canada's Native Peoples.

II. THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Historical Perspective

This study will not constitute an attempt to verify hypothesis, but will instead be an historical search for insights that may serve as the basis for recommendations. It will not be simply the chronicling of facts and events, for while this is one of the patterns that may be used for presenting history,¹⁹ it is not the historians primary function. It is true that the historian works with and through factual material, but it is for the purpose of selecting, organizing and interpreting that which is of significance in enabling him to reconstruct some period of the past.²⁰

It is the historian who give historic importance to facts. He is the one who takes a mere datum about the past and transforms it into a fact of history.

¹⁹Henry S. Commager, The Nature and the Study of History (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Books Inc., 1965), p. 16.

²⁰E. H. Carr, What is History? (London: Pelican Books, 1964), p. 22.

This he does by selecting and interpreting it as significant with regard to the past he is concerned with.

Regardless of the source of the facts chosen or the patterns they are organized into, this reconstruction of the past is the essential function of the historian.

Professor Carr explains this relationship between facts and historical interpretation in the following manner:

The reconstitution of the past in the historian's mind is dependent on empirical evidence. But it is not in itself an empirical process, and cannot consist in a mere recital of facts. On the contrary, the process of reconstitution governs the selection and interpretation of the facts: this indeed, is what makes them historical facts.²¹

Absence of written records with reference to any particular people or period in no way implies that there is no history here. History will simply use whatever is available in its task of reconstruction, and limitations and incompleteness are realities that the historian must accept and face up to. Henry Commager indicates this in his consideration of the "Nature of History".

There are, to be sure, serious limitations on the record, as well as on the ability of history to organize the record; we have to accept this without getting too disturbed about it. First, the record is, and is bound

²¹Ibid.

to be, fragmentary and incomplete. That is particularly true of the several thousand years of history before the invention of the printing press, and of the history of many of the peoples who even after the mid-fifteenth century knew not the art of Gutenberg - the American Indians, for example, or the peoples of Africa, whose history is largely unrecorded.²²

Recognizing the incompleteness of the factual material at his disposal, it is still within the function of the historian to attempt to reconstruct certain aspects of Indian life as it existed in a period of the past. It is accepted that his data will have been recorded by others for as Professor Commager states with reference to the source of historical facts:

Neither collection nor organization is entirely under the control of the individual historian who is, in fact, wholly dependent on others for the material which he uses. No individual scholar can go very far in the collection of his material; mostly it has been done for him over the years and centuries.²³

Research Procedures

This study, being historical in that it will attempt to reconstruct the educative aspects of Blackfoot society before the arrival of the Whiteman, will consider the journals, memoirs, and biographies of the travellers, traders and explorers, in addition to anthropological studies

²²Op. cit., p. 4.

²³Ibid., p. 5.

of the Blackfeet, as recorded facts. And, this is, in effect, what many of them actually are, even by their own admission.

McClintock in the Preface to one of his books about the Blackfoot states that, "My purpose therefore, in writing this book, is to record the results of fifteen years close association with the old Blackfoot chiefs, medicine men and common people."²⁴

Grinnell, who also wrote about these Indians, makes a similar statement:

Shortly after this, I visited the Pi-kun-i tribe of the Blackfeet, and I have spent more or less time in their camps every year since. I have learned to know well all their principal men, besides many of the Bloods and the Blackfeet, and have devoted time and efforts to the work of accumulating from their old men and best warriors the facts bearing on the history, customs, and oral literature of the tribe, which are presented in this volume.²⁵

George Catlin, who believed that the Indians were a vanishing race, and devoted a good portion of his life to the attempt to preserve for future generations a knowledge of their way of life, is another who states that his purpose was the recording of information. His introduction to the

²⁴Walter McClintock, Old Indian Trails (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1923), p. viii.

²⁵George B. Grinnell, Blackfoot Lodge Tales, The Story of a Prairie People (London: David Nutt, 1893), p. xiii.

two-volume collection of letters and notes on Indian manners, customs and conditions makes this evident:

I started out in 1832, and penetrated the vast and pathless wilds which are familiarly denominated the great "Far West" of the North American Continent, with a light heart, inspired with an enthusiastic hope and reliance that I could meet and overcome all the hazards and privations of a life devoted to the production of a literal and graphic delineation of the living manners, customs, and character of an interesting race of people, who are rapidly passing away from the face of the earth - lending a hand to a dying nation, who have no historians or biographers of their own to portray with fidelity their native looks and history; thus snatching from a hasty oblivion what could be saved for the benefit of posterity, and perpetuating it, as a fair and great monument, to the memory of a truly lofty and noble race.²⁶

Other similar examples could be given but these suffice to indicate that here are the collections of material, the sources of data mentioned by Commager.²⁷ While much ethnographic material can and has been drawn from these sources, this in no way prevents them from being functional in historical considerations. Indeed

²⁶George Catlin, North American Indians (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1926), Vol. 1, p. 3.

²⁷Supra, p. 14.

the various ethnographies, in part based on such recorded evidence, can in themselves be regarded as sources of useful historical data. The point to be remembered is that it is the historian who gives historic significance to facts through selecting and interpreting them as relevant to his purpose.²⁸

The above mentioned source materials, then, through selection, organization and interpretation, will be used to reconstruct early Blackfoot Indian culture and the educative processes that functioned within it.

The task, however, does not end here. With early Blackfoot educational patterns established, attention can then be given to the manner in which they evolved under the influence of "White" administrators. Documents, research studies, and government publications will be selected and interpreted as historical facts for the purpose of reconstructing the progress of Indian education through the years leading up to the present. With reference to any evidence of lack of success, or failure to attain expressed goals, the question, "Why?", will be asked. As Carr points out this is part of the function of the historian, for history is a study of causes.²⁹ The historian

²⁸Carr, op. cit., p. 103.

²⁹Ibid., p. 87.

is continually asking why certain things have evolved in a given manner.

Usually a number of possible causes can be assigned to the same sequence of events and these can then be subjected to interpretation as to their significance.³⁰ This study will consider the cultural modifications brought about by "White" settlement and the problems arising out of the imposition of a formal system of schooling. The causes of these difficulties will be evaluated and then examined as having possible implications for Indian education at the present and in the future.

³⁰Ibid., p. 89.

CHAPTER II

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

Before proceeding with a survey of early Blackfoot Indian education it is necessary to establish the historical, geographical and cultural delimitations of the study. It is also important that the term education, in the sense that it is going to be used, be clearly defined.

I. DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

When people think of the term Indian, they frequently envision such things as tipis, mounted warriors with feathered headdresses and vast herds of buffalo. In other words, they are picturing an Indian of the Great Plains and reflecting an all too frequent association depicting him as the ideal Indian--the very essence of Indian-ness. It is necessary, however, to realize that in many ways the Plains Indians were a highly distinctive group and lived in a rather specialized way, or at least in a manner quite different from other kinds of Indians. They were no more typical of the American Indian than the many tribes who lived in other parts of the North and South American continents. It is, perhaps, through the accidents of history and the stereotyping of the movies, that they have come to usurp in the public mind all other Indians and to represent the Indian way of life. This type of attitude is,

of course, overlooking the broad perspective of Indian history in the Americas, and is focusing on one relatively late developing aspect of it. Harry Tschopik indicates this when he states that:

It is a curious fact that Plains culture, the best known of all the North American Indian cultures to the general public, was the latest of all of them to develop. Indeed Plains culture as we know it did not come into being until well after the discovery of the New World; not, in fact, until the Plains tribes had acquired horses from Spanish exploration parties of the seventeenth century in the west.¹

Historical Delimitations

The foregoing statement, however, does not imply that there was no life on the Great Plains prior to the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. While authorities such as Silverberg² and Tschopik³ believe that the area was very sparsely inhabited, they do admit to the presence of a few tribes of pedestrian nomads. Waldo Wendel in an archaeological study of Plains culture, supports this belief in very definite terms:

¹Harry Tschopik, Jr., Indians of North America (New York: The American Museum of Natural History, 1952), p. 16.

²Robert Silverberg, Home of the Red Man (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society, 1963), p. 134.

³Loc. cit.

Far from having been an uninhabited area in prehorse days, the Northwestern Plains have revealed indisputable evidence of human activity running back several thousand years into the past.⁴

Recognizing this continuity to the occupancy of the area, Clark Wissler,⁵ Waldo Wendel⁶ and Harry Tschopik⁷ among others, distinguish between the prehorse period and that period which followed it. This distinction is based on the nature and type of data available for the reconstruction of the history of the Plains culture. The early period, when the historian must turn to the findings of archaeology for assistance, is referred to as the Prehistoric,⁸ while the latter period known from recorded ethnology and history is spoken of as the Historic.

⁴Waldo R. Wendel, Prehistoric Man on the Great Plains (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), p. 247.

⁵Clark Wissler, North American Indians of the Plains (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1927), p. 152.

⁶Op. cit., pp. 249-259.

⁷Loc. cit.

⁸Wendel, op. cit., pp. 261-62.

Considerable support is given to the belief that among the earliest tribes to settle in the Plains were the Blackfoot or Blackfeet, an Algonkian-speaking people from the northeaster woodlands. They are referred to by both titles, with the distinction being that the former is the more literal translation of their native Siksika or Siksikauw which signifies "black-footed people".⁹ It is believed that this was a term used with reference to the black coloured moccasins they wore.

Alfred Kroeber bases his claim for early Blackfoot occupancy of the Plains on linguistic differences between their speech and that of other Algonkian tongues. He believes these differences indicate a long period of separation from eastern and central members of the stock. He concludes:

If the Arapaho and Blackfoot drifted to the base of the Rockies a fairly long time ago, we should have them fulfilling all the geographical and historical conditions which in theory would be needed to account for their set-off linguistic status. Moving them into their recent habitat since the introduction of the horse, or even a century or so before, would not allow time for the existing degree

⁹John C. Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), p. 318.

of diversity, according to all authentic precedent on the rate of alteration of speech. We may therefore regard these two groups of tribes as ancient occupants of the northern true plains, or rather of the foothills of the Rockies and the plains tributary thereto.¹⁰

Support for Kroeber's viewpoint comes from Robert Lowie,¹¹ while Wendel speaks of the Blackfoot as being "the most likely representatives of the prehorse Plains population,"¹² and Wissler expresses the opinion that the Blackfoot "were in the plains a long time before the discovery of America."¹³

While it is Blackfoot life in what has been defined as the Historic Period that is the focus of attention for this study, it is, nevertheless, necessary for the establishment of proper historical perspective to realize that this was a relatively short, but distinctive, period in the total span of Plains Indian and Blackfoot cultural

¹⁰A. L. Kroeber, Culture and Natural Areas of Native North America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1939), p. 82.

¹¹Robert H. Lowie, Indians of the Plains (New York: McGraw--Hill Book Company, Inc., 1954), p. 192.

¹²Op. cit., p. 141.

¹³Clark Wissler, Indians of the United States (New York: Doubleday & Company., Inc., 1946), p. 85.

history. It is a period characterized by the recent introduction of the horse with its resulting modifications to an ancient way of life.

Significance of the introduction of the horse.

While the buffalo had been hunted in earlier days,¹⁴ it was the advent of the horse that caused the Plains Indians, in many instances, to abandon former patterns of subsistence and depend on the vast herds for the necessities of life. The buffalo existed in seemingly never ending numbers and were easily exploited by means of the horse. The result was that this new way of life attracted tribes from all sides and from most of the great linguistic families of North America. As Robert Silverberg expresses it: "The Plains became a melting pot."¹⁵

The Horse Culture Period. This period is referred to by Wissler as "the Horse Culture Period", and in general terms he delimits it as extending from about 1540 to approximately 1880.¹⁶ However, for any particular tribe

¹⁴Wendel, op. cit., pp. 261-62.

¹⁵Op. cit., p. 141.

¹⁶Clark Wissler, North American Indians of the Plains, p. 154.

it spanned the years between the acquisition of horses and the extermination of the all-important buffalo in the area in which they lived.

It is generally accepted that the Blackfoot, together with the Assiniboinnes and Plains Crees were among the last of the Plains tribes to obtain horses. Grinnell, writing in the late 1880's, estimated the acquisition of horses by the Blackfoot as having occurred in the earliest days of that century.¹⁷ However, this rather late date is forcefully refuted by Ewers who believes that the horse was acquired in the second quarter of the 18th century.¹⁸ Lowie lends support to this belief, stating that "the Blackfoot probably did not obtain horses before 1730"¹⁹

However, despite uncertainties as to actual dates, Ewers points out that among the Blackfoot horse acquisition definitely preceded first white contacts.²⁰ The result is that with reference to these people the Historic Period is synonymous with the Horse Culture Period. It is in this

¹⁷George B. Grinnell, Pawnee, Blackfoot and Cheyenne (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), p. 241.

¹⁸John C. Ewers, The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1955), p. 18.

¹⁹Op., cit., p. 41.

²⁰Loc. cit.

phase of Blackfoot history, extending roughly from 1730 to 1880, that the present study proposes to examine primitive educative processes.

Geographical and Cultural Delimitations

It is impossible to strictly define the Plains area in either a geographical or cultural sense. There are variations and gradations that render any attempted absolute criteria invalid. However, it is possible to establish general guidelines, recognizing the fact that differences occur within the limits set by these.

For the purposes of this study the geographic definition of Plains being used is the following:

"Plains" is a geographical term that may be construed loosely to include the area between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains along with adjacent parts of Canada.²¹

The difficulties associated with establishing any absolute boundaries on a cultural basis arise from the fact that aspects of Plains Indian culture are shared with peoples of adjoining districts in all directions. However, certain tribes have a number of peculiar traits whose distribution in more or less complete association is taken as indicating participation in Plains Indian culture.

²¹Lowie, op. cit., p. 1.

That there is a wide sharing in these characteristics is evidenced by the fact that no fewer than thirty-one tribal groups are listed as Plains Indians.²² However, the tribes occupying a central position in the geographic area inhabited by these people are considered most typical, while their immediate neighbours show tendencies to live like more distant tribes. In other words, what is found is a kind of culture center with the purest types, while surrounding this center are less pure cultural types. Wissler believes that "the most typical Plains tribes are the Assiniboin, Blackfoot, Gros Ventre, Crow, Teton-Dakota, Arapho, Cheyenne, Commanche and Kiowa.

The Blackfoot belonged to the Algonkian linguistic family, and as was indicated above, moved into the Plains territory from the northeast. They gravitated westward occupying during the Horse Culture Period "the territory stretching from the North Saskatchewan River in Canada to the southern headstreams of the Missouri in Montana,

²²Wissler, North American Indians of the Plains, p. 19.

²³Ibid., p. 20.

and from about longitude 105°W to the base of the Rocky Mountains."²⁴

This powerful confederation of the Blackfoot, or Siksika Indians, was comprised of the Northern Blackfoot occupying the northern part of the above mentioned territory, the Bloods south of the preceding, and the Piegan who were divided into the South Piegan residing in northern Montana, and the North Piegan who occupied adjacent parts of the Canadian prairies. Although they spoke the same language, had similar customs, the same supernatural beliefs, and even closely intermarried, these three main divisions were independent of each other, each having its own sun-dance, council and head chief.²⁵ However, it is customary to refer to these people by the one general name of Blackfoot or Blackfeet. That this is proper is indicated by Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance, who was himself a member of the Bloods. He points out that it is erroneous to accept the view that they are different tribes, and more correct to look upon them as "bands of

²⁴John R. Swanton, The Indian Tribes of North America (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), p. 396.

²⁵Walter McClintock, The Old North Trail (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1910), p. 1.

the one big tribe".²⁶ In the present study, this interpretation has been accepted, and the term Blackfoot will be used as referring to all the members of the Blackfoot Confederacy taken as one people.

II. DEFINITION OF EDUCATION

Bernard Bailyn points out the weakness to which the educational historian is prone:

Seeking to demonstrate the immemorial importance and the evolution of theories and procedures of the work in which they were engaged, they directed their attention almost exclusively to the part of the educational process carried on in formal institutions of instruction. They spoke of schools as self-contained entities whose development had followed an inner logic and an innate propulsion. From their own professional work they knew enough of the elaborate involvement of the school and society to relate instruction somehow to the environment, but by limiting education to formal instruction they lost the capacity to see it in its full context and hence to assess the variety and magnitude of the burdens it had borne and to judge its historical importance.²⁷

The danger, then, is that the educational historian will view the educative past as residing within the narrow concept of formal instruction or schooling. In this case,

²⁶Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance, Long Lance (London: Faber and Faber, 1956), p. 11.

²⁷Bernard Bailyn, Education in the Forming of American Society (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), p. 9.

efforts would be focused on attempting to find in the past the institutions, practices and materials that are associated with present day schooling. The expectation is that they will be found in a less developed and more primitive form, but that they will be there and they will be familiar. Bailyn sums it up by stating that, "To these writers the past was simply the present writ small."²⁸

This reading of present definitions and ideas back into the past results in a failure to see the past as essentially different, and contributes to the loss of understandings of origins and of development which it is the function of history to provide.²⁹ Restricting the inquiry of this study to the educational forms and procedures associated with formal schooling would result in an incomplete understanding of the important transformations that have occurred in Indian education. To grasp these fundamental changes, one must assume a much broader definition of education. "Education must be viewed not only as formal pedagogy, but as part of the entire process by which a culture transmits itself across generations."³⁰

²⁸Ibid., p. 10.

²⁹Ibid., p. 12.

³⁰Ibid., p. 14.

Education as the Transmission of Culture

Basically then, the term education will be used with reference to the transmission of culture, which the British anthropologist, Edward Tylor, defines as, "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."³¹

In other words, culture is the total life-way of a people; it is the way they survive physiologically, sociologically, and psychologically through time. Obviously for a culture to perpetuate itself, it is necessary for the individuals of the preceding generation, as it gradually dies out, to be prepared for active participation in the culture. Such preparation may be termed education.³² When taken in this sense, education is more closely related to the processes of enculturation and socialization than to the

³¹Edward Tylor, Primitive Culture (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), p. 1.

³²Florian Znaniecki, "The Scientific Function of Sociology of Education," Educational Theory, Vol. 1, No. 2 (August, 1951), p. 70.

formal schooling which is so frequently associated synonymously with the term today. It is education defined in this broader sense, that is the focus of attention in this study.

Basic Components of Social Organization

It is necessary, however, to structure the approach to the study of this concept in greater detail. As the sociologist, Florian Znaniecki points out, "The fact that education in all societies is culturally patterned and socially regulated indicates that it is rooted in the organization of societies."³³

This means that in order to explain the process of education, it is necessary to seek the basic components of social organization on which education depends. Znaniecki suggests that in every society there are two such components: (1) a relatively large, enduring social group, sharing a common culture and continually recruiting new members from the younger generation; and (2) a necessary functional differentiation of occupational roles.³⁴

Based on this, education may be regarded as preparation for group membership, or preparation for specialized

³³Ibid., p. 71.

³⁴Ibid.

roles. The former may be thought of as general education, and:

The explicit, almost universal purpose of general education of candidates for group membership is to have future members accept and follow the same cultural patterns as present members follow, and become loyal members of the group.³⁵

This is establishing a certain "likeness" among group members, and is brought about by transmitting to them common components of the culture which present members share, and training them to conform with the desired patterns of conduct. The necessary elements of this general education are discussed by Znaniecki and may be summarized as follows:

(1) A common language to make communication between members possible.

(2) Common knowledge which may be mystical knowledge about supernatural beings, or social knowledge about the group itself.

(3) Uniformity of action with each member conforming to the moral and legal norms held by the group.

(4) Uniformity of emotional attitudes toward important common values.³⁶

³⁵Ibid., pp. 75-76.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 72-76.

The processes and agencies through which the young Indian received these elements of a general education, together with those used to prepare him for various occupational roles, form the foci of concern for the study of early Blackfoot education.

CHAPTER III

PLAINS INDIAN CULTURE

As has been noted earlier,¹ the Plains tribes shared a sufficiently large number of cultural traits to warrant being classed together as representing a distinctive mode of life. This chapter will constitute a general discussion of Plains Indian culture with specific reference being made to the Blackfoot. It will be establishing the broad cultural base upon which the study of educative processes will take place.

1. MATERIAL CULTURE

In general terms, the material culture of the Plains Indians may be summed up as follows:

The chief traits of this culture are the dependence upon the buffalo or bison, and the very limited use of roots and berries; absence of fishing; lack of agriculture; the tipi as a movable dwelling; transportation by land only, with the dog and the travois (in historic times with the horse); want of basketry and pottery; no true weaving; clothing of buffalo and deerskins; a special bead technique; high development of work in skins; special rawhide work (parfleche, cylindrical bags, etc.); use of a circular shield; weak development of work in wood, stone and bone. Their art

¹Supra, p. 26.

is strongly geometric, but as a whole not 'symbolic'.²

Subsistence

The Blackfoot, thus, were large game hunters, dependent to a great extent on the buffalo as the chief source of food and raw materials. Although other animals such as the elk, deer, and antelope were hunted and wild roots and berries eaten when available, it was the buffalo that was their "staff of life". The Blackfoot called it their "real food".³

While it is true that some of the marginal Plains tribes such as the village dwelling Pawnee did grow crops, this primitive form of agriculturalism did not extend to the Blackfoot. It is interesting to note that Wissler believes its absence "is due to unfavorable soil and climate rather than to any mental or social differences in the tribes concerned".⁵

²Clark Wissler, The American Indian (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 222.

³John C. Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), p. 87.

⁴Robert H. Lowie, Indians of the Plains (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1954), p. 18.

⁵Clark Wissler, North American Indians of the Plains (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1927), p. 30.

Shelter

Among the Plains Indians seasonal migrations were typical of both nomadic and semisedentary tribes. As a result there was a need for a light, easily portable dwelling. The tipi of the eastern woodlands Algonkians was adapted for this purpose.⁶ In place of birch bark, buffalo hides were used to cover the conical framework of poles. While the semi-sedentary peoples used tipis only when following the buffalo on tribal hunts, the nomadic tribes, such as the Blackfoot, lived in these portable dwellings throughout the year.

Domestic Animals

The only aboriginal domestic animal was the dog. While they were eaten by some of the Plains tribes, this was not a general tendency, and the chief reasons for keeping them were based on their usefulness in packing and transporting the Indians' home, furnishings and utensils. The Blackfoot, in particular, had a strong disinclination to eating these animals and kept them primarily for transportation purposes.⁷ This use of dogs continued throughout the Historic Period.

⁶Robert Silverberg, Home of the Red Man (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society, 1963), p. 145.

⁷Ewers, op. cit., p. 10.

The introduction of the horse, of course, vitally altered hunting and transportation methods, as well as brought about changes in other aspects of Indian life. Lowie calls it one "of the two momentous innovations due to contacts with Whites." The other was the acquisition of "guns from the northeast."⁸

What John Ewers terms the "horse complex", that is the whole complex of cultural elements associated with the use of the horse,⁹ was readily adopted by the pre-existing, pedestrian buffalo hunting economy, the bearers of which recognized that this would be of great advantage to their way of life. The horse increased mobility, expediated hunting and made possible the transporting of much heavier loads.

However, this was not merely the addition of new cultural elements to the old. While the Horse Culture Period may have retained, with little modifications, many traits found in the earlier mode of existence, changes were not only quantitative but qualitative as well. Ewers indicates this fact when he states that:

⁸Op. cit., p. 40.

⁹John C. Ewers, The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1955), p. xi.

The use of horses not only enriched the material culture of the tribes who acquired them but it altered their habits of daily life, served to develop new manual and motor skills, changed their concepts of their physical environment and the social relationships of individuals.¹⁰

Probably the most distinctive new cultural traits were social rather than material in nature. In particular, the acquisition of horses revolutionized the Indian's economic concepts, and created great differences in wealth and correlatively in prestige or social status.¹¹

Crafts

As regards crafts, the Indian women were good skin dressers and extensively used hides and dressed skins. These took the place of cloth and the dressing of pelts was an important feminine industry. Wissler states that "it was not only a woman's work but her worth and virtue were estimated by her output".¹²

In earlier times all essential clothing was made from soft, tanned hides, with buffalo robes providing the extra coverage necessary in cold weather. They served as blankets.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 338.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Clark Wissler, North American Indians of the Plains, p. 58.

However, because of the ease of obtaining cloth from traders, and the Indians' ready acceptance of it, this material came to be very much in evidence in the Historic Period.

Associated with the manufacture of clothing was another highly developed feminine skill. This was porcupine quill embroidery which was considered a sacred craft.¹³ This traditional art continued to flourish in the Horse Culture Period. However, it was supplemented to an ever increasing extent by beadwork, as beads were made more readily available by the white traders.

In contrast to their skill in using animal skins, the Blackfoot displayed no aptitude for weaving or basketry, and woodwork was not developed to any significant extent. Also, while there is some evidence of ancient pottery vessels being used by these people,¹⁴ this practice had ceased long before the Horse Culture Period. Grinnell indicates that early in this period, "the Blackfoot made buckets, cups, basins, and dishes from the lining of the buffalo's paunch."¹⁵

¹³Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, p. 119.

¹⁴Lowie, op. cit., p. 24.

¹⁵George B. Grinnell, Pawnee, Blackfoot and Cheyenne (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), p. 103.

However, it is also believed that many of their tools and utensils were made of bone and stone. Descriptions by early travelers¹⁶ and archaeological excavations¹⁷ reveal knives, pipes, axes, scrapers, kettles, spoons and other implements formed from these substances. The obvious superiority of metal equipment, however, led the Indians to abandon their earlier equivalents of bone and stone at the earliest possible date. In many cases, this occurred through barter with other Indians long before the arrival of the explorers. The result is that metal implements were very much in evidence in the Historic Period.

Weapons

When the Blackfoot were first contacted by the white fur traders about 1750,¹⁸ they were already well supplied with horses. However, they were without guns and their usual weapons were still bows, arrows, clubs and lances. This placed them at a disadvantage in their contacts with the gun-equipped Cree and Assiniboin who menaced their northeastern boundary. However, within twenty years they

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 103-04.

¹⁷Waldo R. Wendel, Prehistoric Man on the Great Plains (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), p. 247.

¹⁸Clark Wissler, Indians of the United States (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1946), p. 86.

were well armed, had begun to expand in power, to terrorize the surrounding Indians and to be known as the "Tigers of the Plains."¹⁹ This they remained until their camps were ravaged by the dreaded white man's diseases, and their social discipline was destroyed through the influence of the "whisky traders."

II. SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Under the heading "Social Organization", it is customary to consider all habits and customs having to do with familial relations, community structures, and with what is referred to in modern times as political units. In order to establish the general framework of social conditions that existed in the Historic Period of Blackfoot culture, some of the more important features of this "social organization" needs be reviewed.

Political Units

Tribes. It has been customary to hold that the political units among the Indian peoples were the various tribes or independent nations. These were characterized by "self identity" as being one people, and

¹⁹Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance, Long Lance (London: Faber and Faber, 1956), p. 11.

by support of a governing structure controlling all members of the group. Thus, while among the residents of the Plains there were some tribes such as the Crow that recognized several subdivisions, they nevertheless felt that they were one people and maintained a governing council for the whole.²⁰

However, the situation with reference to the Blackfoot was somewhat different. They were composed of three distinct political divisions, the Piegan, the Blood, and the Northern Blackfoot, with no form of unifying government. They did, however, feel that they were one people with common interests and, since they have almost identical cultures, it has been customary to ignore these political units and refer to them by one term. As was indicated earlier, this is what is being done in the present study.

Nevertheless, in reviewing social organization, it is necessary to accept the fact that within the Blackfoot Confederation there were three independent political units that, in this sense, could be termed separate tribes.

Bands. Each of the tribes were in turn composed of a number of smaller units under the leadership of a head

²⁰Wessler, North American Indians of the Plains, p. 90.

chief, assisted by a few minor chiefs. These subdivisions, which varied in size and make-up, are often designated, in the literature on Indians, as bands. Lowie defines a band as "a local group of people wandering in search of sustenance."²¹

Among the Indian peoples, it frequently happened that members of these bands were related, having inherited their membership according to a fixed system. When this is the case the term "clan" is used instead of band.²² While Wissler does discuss some indications of clan systems and their resulting social restrictions among the Plains Indians,²³ in general with the exception of the village-dwelling tribes of the mid-west, such as the Hidatsa and Mandan, clans were lacking. Families of the same area were merely grouped into loosely organized bands. Citing evidence from Clark Wissler's papers for the American Museum of Natural History, Lowie concludes that the Blackfoot were a borderline case, and although Wissler himself preferred

²¹Op. cit., p. 87.

²²Ibid., p. 90.

²³North American Indians of the Plains, pp. 92-93.

to speak of Blackfoot bands, Lowie feels that indications of a marginal clan structure were present.²⁴

However, of greater significance to the present study is the fact that these bands or clans were the basic functioning social unit of Blackfoot life. While it is true that on a tribal level the Blackfoot had attained a great complexity of organization, this was only for a portion of the year. The more complex social activities associated with the organized camp circle, were usually only carried on from the beginning of spring until the beginning of winter. During the rest of the year economic reasons forced the Blackfoot to split up into the smaller social units.²⁵

Within this framework, the political organization was rather loose and, in general, quite democratic. Grinnell states that "among the Blackfeet, all men were free and equal, and office was not hereditary."²⁶

Authority. Each band informally recognized an indefinite number of men as chiefs. One of this number, by

²⁴Op. cit., p. 91.

²⁵Ibid., p. 87.

²⁶George B. Grinnell, Blackfoot Lodge Tales, The Story of a Prairie People (London: David Nutt, 1893), p. 219.

virtue of his bravery and generosity, would be regarded as the head chief and the band representative in tribal affairs. The tribal head chief was chosen by the chiefs of the bands from their own number, and was usually the one who had the best war record as proven at the various ceremonies. In effect the leading men of each band were forming a tribal council which in turn recognized one individual as head chief.²⁷

As a general rule, the title was honorary and implied little actual authority for the bearer, although an exceptional individual could exert great influence. In all important matters he consulted with the minor chiefs, and so, actually, power within the tribe was being exercised by a body of men who had qualified for social eminence by reason of their war records and generosity.²⁸

Coercive authority was exercised only through the appointment of a "men's society" for policing the collective hunts, the major festivals and other important aspects of social life. Grinnell lists the crimes considered serious

²⁷Wissler, North American Indians of the Plains, p. 96.

²⁸Lowie, op. cit., p. 113.

enough to warrant punishment as murder, theft, adultery, treachery, cowardice, and infractions of hunting regulations.²⁹ Other undesirable social actions were deterred through the tremendous influence of public opinion. The Indians attached great importance to their social image and were extremely sensitive to anything that might alter it. Public ridicule was a mortification so intense that it could drive the individual into exile, or into reckless war exploits.³⁰

Familial Relations

Within the band and tribal structure, a very important component of social organization was the family. In many respects the familial customs of the Plains Indians were similar to those found elsewhere among primitive people.

Marriage. Polygamy was an accepted practice and a man might have several wives. However, relatively few had more than three, and in fact, many marriages were monogamous.³¹ It is worth noting that this was a natural and necessary expedient growing out of other aspects of Indian social life.

²⁹Grinnell, Blackfoot Lodge Tales, The Story of a Prairie People, p. 220.

³⁰Lowie, op. cit., pp. 114-15.

³¹Ibid., p. 80.

The division of labour between the sexes followed a pattern in which the men provided game and security for the tribe or band, while the women engaged in a wide range of manual labour, which included collecting roots and berries, preserving and preparing food, bringing in fuel and water, dressing skins, making and maintaining the tipi, and providing and repairing all clothing.³² As no slaves were kept and servants were unknown, a man could only meet the needs of his social obligations by regulating the number of wives he possessed. As his social status increased there was a need for more domestic help, and thus a need for a greater number of wives. Walter McClintock explains this with reference to the Blackfoot in the following statement:

A chief must be kind-hearted and open-handed, ever ready to share his food supply with the poorest of his tribe. His tipi must always welcome the stranger, and it devolved upon him to entertain generously the visiting chiefs and delegations from other tribes. One can readily see that such responsibilities required a family organization that was not possible to the Blackfeet excepting through polygamy.³³

³²Ibid.

³³Walter McClintock, The Old North Trail (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1910), p. 189.

Relatives. One important aspect of family life, with important implications for education, was the fact that marriage created a series of new bonds with one's relatives-in-law. Though details varied, most Plains tribes prescribed definite rules of conduct between a person and his mate's kin. One extremely widespread practice found among the Blackfoot was the mutual avoidance of a man and his mother-in-law. Speaking of this Grinnell states that:

It was considered a gross breach of propriety for a man to meet his mother-in-law, and if by any mischance he did so, or what was worse, if he spoke to her, she demanded a very heavy payment which he was obliged to make. The mother-in-law was equally anxious to avoid meeting or speaking to her son-in-law.³⁴

Frequently associated with the rules of conduct was the attaching of specific duties or privileges to relatives outside the immediate family. These extended from responsibilities for instruction to the right to discipline.³⁵

Children. Another significant feature of Indian family life was the great love held for children. Parents deeply loved their offspring and lavished affection upon them. Ewers speaks of the Blackfoot as being "fond and

³⁴Pawnee, Blackfoot and Cheyenne, p. 98.

³⁵Lowie, op. cit., p. 82.

indulgent parents". 36

This trait had important educational implications, for to outsiders it frequently appeared as if the child were free from all restraint and discipline, and was, in fact, being very badly brought up.³⁷

Community Structures

Societies. Apart from a person's social ties with his family, and the tribe or band in general, the Plains Indian was usually included in an organizational structure of a special nature. This was the system of societies or fraternal associations that Wissler feels "must be set down with the camp circle as one of the most characteristic social traits of the Plains".³⁸

While there were some associations of women, such as the Muto-Ka-iks or Buffalo Society among the Blackfoot,³⁹ on the whole the societies were most frequently masculine, and served a great variety of purposes in the tribal life

³⁶Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, p. 101.

³⁷Amelia M. Paget, The People of the Plains (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1909), p. 119.

³⁸North American Indians of the Plains, p. 103.

³⁹McClintock, op. cit., pp. 450-51.

of the Historic Period. They provided the individual with companionship, promoted the military ideal, and performed certain religious ceremonies. However, their foremost function was the policing of the people especially at crucial times such as at the collective hunt, the march or the sun dance.⁴⁰ Because members of these societies belonged to different hunting bands, they were active only during the summer season, when the tribal camp was organized.

Among the Blackfoot, this organizational structure was known as the I-Kun-uh'-kah-tsi or the association of the All Comrades, and consisted of anywhere up to a dozen or more secret societies, composed of men of approximately the same age level.⁴¹ This was the result, as Wissler indicates, of the fact that the societies were "arranged in a series so that ordinarily a man passes from one to the other in order, like school children in their grades, thus automatically grouping the members according to age."⁴²

Boys in their teens would buy their way into the lowest ranked society, that is they would acquire the right to a certain set of regalia, songs, dances and privileges, by presenting gifts of horses and other valuable goods to the members.

⁴⁰Grinnell, Blackfoot Lodge Tales, The Story of a Prairie People, p. 221.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 220.

⁴²North American Indians of the Plains, p. 101.

This displaced the original members who then jointly bought the privileges and emblems of an older group. Societies usually sold out to younger men every four years, and thus, the individual spent a good portion of his life striving to move up the ladder into more important societies. It is worth noting, however, that mere wealth was not the sole determinant of membership. A man had to possess a reputation for valor as well. Lowie points out that virtually all men of the Blackfoot tribe remained in this associational structure until old age when they retired from the system.⁴³

On the Plains, then, these societies were the core of a man's existence, and inseparably related to them was the attitude which held that warfare was a vital part of life and the chief means of showing prowess and gaining prestige. The Blackfoot society of the Crazy Dogs had a war song that reflects the type of attitude being cultivated among the members of these groups:

It is bad to live to be old
Better to die young
Fighting Bravely in battle.⁴⁴

⁴³Op. cit., p. 97.

⁴⁴Ruth Underhill, Red Man's America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 106.

Social rank. While distinctions in social rank occurred,⁴⁵ there were no hereditary social classes. As is common everywhere, the children of distinguished parents enjoyed certain advantages. However, it was necessary for all individuals to prove themselves, to gain prestige and honour through their own efforts, assisted by the supernatural power they possessed.

Wissler notes that the amount of social distinction a person enjoyed was not based entirely on the amount of property he possessed. He indicates that the real aristocrats of Plains Indian society were those with great and good deeds to their credit.⁴⁶ This meant that next to a fine war record, an individual could best win social prestige and attain the status of being a great man through generosity to others. Wissler states that "the lavish giving away of property was a sure road to social distinction."⁴⁷

While these traits were generally accepted by all as the means of attaining higher social status, this did not indicate that they failed to recognize a certain

⁴⁵Ewers, The Horse In Blackfoot Indian Culture, pp. 240-44.

⁴⁶North American Indians of the Plains, p. 103.

⁴⁷Ibid.

social ranking based on the accumulation of property.⁴⁸ In historic times this wealth was determined primarily in terms of horse ownership, and as the principle means of acquiring horses was through raiding parties, it was, thus, possible for young men to seek wealth and honor at the same time.

However, horses were not the only valued possession. Prestige gained from the ownership of sacred medicine bundles⁴⁹ was never lost, and this was a form of security not found in the possession of horses which might die or be stolen. The Indian's attitude is well expressed in the following comparison: "While with us young men are exhorted to open a savings account, among the Blackfoot they are advised to become owners of medicine bundles."⁵⁰

Social customs. In addition to the foregoing components of social organization, there was a pattern of established social customs that regulated all aspects of home and camp life. These were supposed to be known to everyone, and any failure to observe these conventions was regarded by the Blackfoot as a breach of good manners.⁵¹

⁴⁸Ewers, loc. cit.

⁴⁹Infra, p. 58.

⁵⁰Clark Wissler in Lowie, op. cit., p. 116.

⁵¹Grinnell, Pawnee, Blackfoot and Cheyenne, pp. 176-79.

III. SUPERNATURALISM

Among primitive peoples, it is difficult to maintain a rigid distinction between the concept of magic and that of religion. Magic may be defined as the use of supernatural techniques for gaining one's ends, while religion is the appeal to supernatural beings.⁵² Because of the difficulties involved in attempting to maintain distinctions between religion and magic, it is more useful to have the single term "supernaturalism" for the whole system of beliefs and practices involving power beyond that of human beings. This is the sense in which the term is used in this study.

Supernatural Power

Nothing like the one, supreme, overruling God, that Christianity associates with the concept of religion, is found among the Plains Indians. In place of an established concept of a god-like being, the Indians believed in a kind of supernatural power emanating from an indefinite source and in which all things could share to a greater or less degree. Clark Wissler explains that "the Blackfoot resolved the phenomena of the universe into 'powers', the greatest and most universal of which is sun power."⁵³

⁵²Lowie, op. cit., p. 154.

⁵³North American Indians of the Plains, pp. 110-11.

Sources. While Blackfoot legends recognized the figure of Na'pi or Old Man as being in some ways god-like,⁵⁴ their chief source of supernatural power was the sun. So important was the sun to these people that Wissler refers to it as being "in a way a personal god."⁵⁵

As well as power residing in and emanating from the sun, supernatural power was also found in the skies and in the waters as well as on the land. Thunder was one of the most powerful of the sky spirits sometimes referred to as Above Persons. Wind Maker was a representative of the underwater spirits, while Ground Man typified the power of the earth, highly respected by the Blackfoot. In addition, many animals and birds, such as the buffalo, bears, elk, horses, eagles and crows had power given them by the sun. All of these sources, under the proper circumstances, could communicate a sharing in this to human beings.⁵⁶

Methods of Obtaining Power

This power was necessary to the success of all activities and among the Blackfoot, a striking feature was the way in which supernaturalism pervaded every sphere of

⁵⁴Grinnell, Blackfoot Lodge Tales, The Story of a Prairie People, p. 258.

⁵⁵North American Indians of the Plains, p. 111.

⁵⁶Grinnell, Blackfoot Lodge Tales, The Story of a Prairie People, p. 260.

life from warfare to family relations. Because of its importance, supernatural power was sought by nearly all adult men, and by some women.

Dreams. The usual way of obtaining it was through dreams, which to the Indians were a reality.⁵⁷ As a result of this belief, individuals would go out to a lonely spot for the purpose of having a revelation. After vigilant fasting and praying, an animal, bird or one of the spirits of nature would appear in a vision or dream and express the willingness to share its power. Ewers depicts the general pattern these dreams followed:

The spirit then showed him certain objects sacred to it and told him how they should be made and cared for, and how they should be manipulated to bring the man success and to protect him from harm. The spirit also gave him the songs, face paint, designs, taboos, and the ritual associated with the use of its particular "medicine".⁵⁸

⁵⁷J. W. Schultz, My Life As An Indian (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1907), p. 149.

⁵⁸Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, p. 163.

Medicine bundles. In accordance with the dream instructions, the individual would collect and make the articles which would comprise his "medicine bundle". The best known and most highly developed type of bundle, among the Blackfoot, was the medicine-pipe bundle.⁵⁹ All of these sacred objects were the symbols of a person's power and remained in his possession until he wished to transfer the power to someone else. These bundles could be bought and sold and Ewers points out that the "frequent transfer of medicine bundles was encouraged by the Blackfoot belief that having owned important bundles added to a man's prestige and social position. . . . Everyone knew that purchase of an important bundle required sacrifice of considerable property and that learning the ritual of the bundle was an intellectual accomplishment."⁶⁰

Sale of power. As not all individuals were successful in acquiring power through dreams, and those who had not done so did not wish to be thereby handicapped throughout life, the sale of power was the readily accepted means of resolving the dilemma. Not only were medicine bundles

⁵⁹Wissler, North American Indians of the Plains, p. 116.

⁶⁰The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, p. 165.

bought and sold, but successful visionaries would also sell a share in their personal power to those who were less fortunate. They would give them a replica of their sacred symbol and teach them the songs and rituals associated with its use.⁶¹

The Sun Dance

Of all the rituals and ceremonies practiced by the Plains Indians, the most important in the Historic Period was the sun dance. This great tribal religious festival has been described as "their holy sacrament, the supreme expression of their religion."⁶²

It took place during the summer months when the entire tribe was assembled, and was characterized by elaborate procedures based on careful preparation and attention to detail. The common belief that it was chiefly an occasion for the self torture of youths, who were candidates for admission to the full standing of warriors, is a misconception. The sun dance was much more than this. It was a time for fulfilling vows made during sickness or crisis, a time for fasting, praying and partaking of sacred food and, in general, a time for expressing gratitude and seeking continued spiritual assistance. Typical of the

⁶¹Ibid., p. 127.

⁶²McClintock, The Old North Trail, p. 170.

prayers offered is the following recorded by McClintock:

Great Sun Power! I am praying for my people
that they may be happy in the summer and
they may live through the cold of winter,
Many are sick and in want. Pity them and
let them survive. Grant that they may live
long and have abundance. . . .⁶³

IV. SUMMARY

This chapter has presented a broad, general picture of Plains Indian culture. It has established the basic pattern of one form of primitive life found in North America. Specific reference was made to the Blackfoot, who were one of a group of tribes that shared many of the cultural traits associated with this way of life.

They were a nomadic, hunting people, largely dependent on the buffalo for food, clothing, shelter and raw materials. In the period under consideration, the horse was also of major significance.

The Blackfoot, and the Plains Indians in general, were characterized by the existence of tribes. However, in many cases these actually functioned for only a portion of the summer season. Smaller groups known as bands or clans were the basic functioning social unit for the greater part of the year. In addition, many of the tribes had a

⁶³Ibid., p. 297.

system of age-graded societies that was of major significance in the life of these people. This was especially true with regard to the Blackfoot.

The family was also an important social unit. Marriages could be monogamous, but polygamy was frequently practiced. However, whatever the marriage pattern, the significant fact was that familial relations were characterized by a great love and respect for children, and the diffusion of privileges and responsibilities to relatives outside the immediate family unit.

Of major importance was the role that the supernatural played in the cultural life of the Plains Indians. They believed that supernatural power was necessary for success in all activities, and great stress was placed upon acquiring and retaining this assistance. Obtained through dream or purchase it played a vital role in the individual's life. This emphasis on the supernatural resulted in many rituals and ceremonies, the most important of which was the sun dance.

Plains Indian culture, then, was a well developed and complex way of life. In attempting a one chapter review of such a culture only a cursory consideration can be given factors that warrant a much more penetrating examination. However, such a broad overview does serve to establish the cultural perspective necessary for a study of primitive educative processes.

CHAPTER IV

BLACKFOOT EDUCATION: PREPARATION FOR GROUP MEMBERSHIP

When one thinks of the term "education" with its present day connotations, immediately there springs to mind formal institutions, sets of regulations, timetables, and curriculum patterns. However, in the history of man's evolution, education was taking place long before anyone thought of it in this formalistic and isolated way. Primitive education was education reduced to its simplest terms. In place of the "little red schoolhouse", the family and tribe were the educating agencies which prepared the young for their roles in adult life, training them in the ways of their culture so that they might become functioning members of their society. In this regard Pettitt points out that primitive education may be thought of as "a process of culture transmission brought into play for the purpose of perpetrating an already established culture and the social group associated with it."¹

Every society is marked by a differentiation of

¹George A. Pettitt, "Primitive Education in North America," University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology, XLIII (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), p. 14.

functions performed by its members,² and an aspect of education is the preparation of individuals for these specialized roles. However, the educative processes relating to this area will be considered in the following chapter. Here the concern is with the familial and community activities which contribute to the development of the culturally desirable type of individual and his integration into the social patterns of the society to which he belongs. In other words, the focus is on education for group membership.

1. THE AIMS OF BLACKFOOT EDUCATION

While primitive Indian education may have been unconcious of its own aims, it nevertheless had specific purposes toward which it was directed. The objectives, goals, ideals and values of the Blackfoot were incorporated in a standard of excellence embodied in individuals. This "group ideal" or concept of what a member of the group should be was a focal point towards which the educative process was directed. The educational system, if it may be called a system, developed in the individual those characteristics and traits held as necessary for his own

²Scott A. Greer, Social Organization (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 6.

well-being and the welfare of the group.

The Cultural Ideal for Men

Among the Blackfoot the focus was upon the "warrior ideal" and strong cultural compulsions oriented the boys towards it as Ewers indicates in the following statement:

Individual participation in either horse or scalp raids was always voluntary. Yet so great was the value placed upon warlike deeds in Blackfoot culture, and so obvious were the rewards of successful theft of enemy horses, that few able-bodied young men refrained from participation.³

While other traits were also looked upon as desirable, military prowess was recognized as the standard of excellence, and the young Indian through the various educative processes that were operative, came to accept this ideal. He recognized it as a means of obtaining horses which would enable him to become a more successful hunter,⁴ another valued characteristic of a "good" Blackfoot. Warfare was also the means of gaining social prestige and of becoming wealthy. This, in turn, made it possible for the individual to gain further respect among his people by exercising generosity in sharing horses and meat, and in giving other gifts. In

³John C. Ewers, The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1955), p. 214.

⁴Ibid., pp. 158-59.

a society where group security depended upon the sharing of resources, this was a very important trait to be developed in all individuals. The following passage illustrates the attention given to the practice of generosity and, at the same time, shows the ultimate reference of individual excellence to war exploits:

The stingy rich man was despised by his less fortunate fellows. The generous man of wealth was beloved by them. If he was liberal in feasting and in giving away food and horses to the needy, if he lent horses to the poor for their use in hunting and moving camp, his fellow band members would want him for their chief--provided he also possessed a fine war record.⁵

The Blackfoot youth, then, were expected to be warriors and hunters, men who could be of service to their tribe in defending honor and property, and in providing the necessities of life. As Long Lance indicates, this was to be the boy's only profession and the sole purpose of his training was to produce a brave man, a good and courageous fighter.⁶

⁵John C. Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), p. 96.

⁶Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance, Long Lance (London: Faber and Faber, 1956), p. 17.

The Cultural Ideal For Women

In like manner there was a cultural standard with reference to the type of behavior deemed desirable for girls. The ideal Indian woman was to be skilled in the feminine crafts and always thoughtful and considerate of others,⁷ in addition to this, it was supremely important that she be virtuous and chaste.⁸ Grinnell further states that "all Indians like to see women more or less sober and serious minded, not giggling all the time, not silly."⁹

Within Blackfoot society there were a number of means used to make sure that the young became aware of, and conform to these cultural ideals. These means were the educative processes that functioned to prepare the youth for membership in this social group and they constitute the foci of attention in this chapter.

II. IMITATION

One of the most commonly accepted attributes of primitive education is the dominance of imitation as an

⁷Walter McClintock, The Old North Trail (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1910), p. 176.

⁸James W. Schultz, My Life As An Indian (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1907), p. 114.

⁹George B. Grinnell, Blackfoot Lodge Tales, The Story of a Prairie People (London: David Nutt, 1893), p. 190.

educative method. Wilds and Lottich reflect this opinion:

Long before man made any conscious attempts to educate his children, the children began to educate themselves through unconscious imitation of the activities of their elders. Much of this unconscious imitation was carried on as play.¹⁰

However, too much significance must not be given to the educative function of imitation as a unique characteristic of primitive Indian education. Imitation of elders by the young is found in all societies, and Pettitt would claim that there is no proof that primitive peoples made a greater use of it.¹¹ The apparent greater emphasis may have risen from the fact that the adults concerned themselves more exclusively with activities that the children were familiar with by direct observation and that they found fun in imitating. The rigid separation of the "world of the child" from the "world of the adult" that exists in modern society was not as pronounced among the Indian peoples. As a result the young were familiar with adult occupations and roles, and these were readily

¹⁰Elmer H. Wilds and Kenneth V. Lottich, The Foundations of Modern Education (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 12.

¹¹Pettitt, op. cit., p. 40.

adapted to play activities. That imitative play was significant in early Blackfoot education is indicated by the following statement:

Children's play varied with their ages, with the sexes, and with the seasons. It had real educational value. In their play children imitated many of the activities of their elders and so painlessly prepared themselves for the responsibilities of adult life. At play girls learned the rudiments of baby care, craftwork, housekeeping, and moving camp. Boys competitive sports were rowdy enough to toughen their bodies and varied enough to develop their agility and skill in the use of weapons. This play helped to improve their bodily co-ordination and gave them valuable practice in making quick, sure decisions in the midst of action--excellent training for the future hunter and warrior.¹²

This importance of play is further illustrated by McClintock, who describes Piegan youngsters playing in a small-sized encampment of their own:

They had a miniature camp with little play-teepees, men and women dolls dressed in skin costumes, with real hair, little belts, and moccasins and leggings to match the clothes. In the center of the camp, which was in the form of a circle, was a teepee for the head-chief, it had the diminutive back-rests and painted rawhide cases, little tanning tools, knife sheaths and squirrel-skins for robes.¹³

¹²Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, p. 146.

¹³Walter McClintock, Old Indian Trails (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1923), p. 196.

In these play camps the girls would assume feminine roles such as putting up and caring for the tipi. The boys would bring them rabbits or other small game just as if they were men returning from the hunt. The boys would also imitate the ceremonies of the mens' societies and conduct raids on the adult camp for the purpose of providing food for a feast.¹⁴

Imitation As Stimulated, Directed Practice.

Recognizing the importance of this imitative play as an educative process in Blackfoot society, it is still necessary to consider the means by which this technique was activated. If by imitation is meant the spontaneous and undirected mimicry of adult activities, much of the children's play could not be placed under this heading. Evidence supports the conclusion that implements and toys were presented to the youngsters by elders, along with instruction in their use. This was not just imitation but stimulated, directed practice with the use of models. This is certainly not an idea foreign to modern day educators.

¹⁴Robert H. Lowie, Indians of the Plains (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1954), p. 118.

Ewers explains that "children's toys were made for them by their elders,"¹⁵ and that furthermore, "the toys of Blackfoot children were designed to help them imitate the daily activities of their elders in their play."¹⁶

McClintock also writes of adults making little lodges for the children and setting them up in their proper order,¹⁷ while Long Lance relates that his mother made him his first bow and arrow and a horsehair scalplock so that he could play at war.¹⁸ This was fostering activities that would be in harmony with the occupations of later life.

Chief Buffalo Child further states that the Indian boys were so thoroughly informed about famous Blackfoot battles that whenever the site of one of these was visited by the migrating tribe the boys would organize themselves into mock war parties and reenact the conflict. He indicates that the adults took a keen interest in these events, not only making sure that the proper battle skills were employed, but also applauding and honoring the youths when they returned to camp.¹⁹

¹⁵Loc. cit.

¹⁶Ewers, The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture, p. 225.

¹⁷The Old North Trail, p. 431.

¹⁸Op. cit., pp. 37-38.

¹⁹Ibid.

In a similar manner, the feminine skills that the little girls played at in their miniature camps were not solely the result of spontaneous imitation. At an early age they received instruction in the crafts from their mothers and the other women.²⁰ These were then practiced as they were performed in their play activities.

Thus, there was an adult stimulus to the young Indians' games and quite frequently adult supervision as well. These served to foster the learning of the behavior patterns necessary for membership in Blackfoot society. McClintock narrates an incident that occurred at a tribal dance that well indicates the active role elders were playing in stimulating the imitation of desired behavior skills:

The wife of Stock-stchi, who was not dancing, sat with her little daughter of about twelve years, both intently watching. The dance was just at its height and the little girl's eyes were sparkling with excitement, when her mother, snatching off her own blanket threw it over the shoulders of the little girl and pushed her into the circle. . . . At first she was abashed and cast her eyes demurely downward, but she soon forgot herself and entered into the dance with animation, her

²⁰McClintock, The Old North Trail, pp. 235-36.

lithe body swaying to and fro, and her small moccasined feet keeping perfect time to the beating of the rattles.²¹

Methods of Stimulating Imitation of Approved Activities

It is, therefore, possible to conclude that while Blackfoot children, just like all children, imitated what they saw, nevertheless, certain behaviors that were culturally desirable had the imitation of these actions fostered in a number of ways. In other words, there was a deliberate discouragement of undesirable imitative play and an effective stimulation of approved activities. For this purpose the Indians utilized a variety of psychologically based methods of encouraging imitative activities which would prepare the youngsters for adult life. These methods, which may be categorized as "social pressures", are techniques which the group has "evolved to recognize ceremonially and collectively what is culturally meritorious or to condemn the reverse."²²

Under this heading it is possible to consider such things as the public recognition of culturally ideal

²¹Ibid., pp. 100-01.

²²Pettitt, op. cit., p. 47.

behavior; the use of group supported praise and ridicule as incentives to learning; and the correlation of certain privileges with the individual's degree of maturity.

Public recognition. One of the most important means of orienting the young towards desired patterns of behavior was to afford public recognition to actions that approximated the culturally ideal. This the Blackfoot did in a number of ways. The feats of a brave returning from a war party were publicly sung throughout the camp by his female relatives.²³ In addition, a warrior's deeds would be recorded on his robe,²⁴ and his achievements thus displayed would bring him honor wherever he went. The exploits of a brave chief were acknowledged by being publicly exposed to view through paintings on the sides of a tipi.²⁵

At the great religious festival of the sun dance successful warriors were given the privilege of performing certain ceremonies. Associated with these functions was

²³Schultz, op. cit., pp. 47-48.

²⁴Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, p. 117.

²⁵McClintock, The Old North Trail, p. 220.

the public narration of the exploits qualifying the individuals for these honors.²⁶ The relating of these achievements was frequently made more vivid through a dramatic re-enactment of the experience. This is described by Ewers:

The warriors dramatized their accounts by re-enacting their accomplishments, the killing of an enemy, the capture of a weapon or a horse, or the taking of a scalp. They achieved considerable realism in these performances by such acts as firing their guns in the air and riding around the lodge with stick horses between their legs.²⁷

McClintock records how the warriors at this time would engage in sham battles, both on foot and mounted on horses. These battles depicted their former victories over hostile Indian tribes, and it is noted that "their functions were to excite the people, both old and young, and to stir up enthusiasm for war and make young men eager to fight."²⁸

Public recognition was also afforded the generous man. McClintock relates an episode in which a chief urges his people to be generous to a visiting tribe, and then

²⁶Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, p. 179.

²⁷Ibid., p. 181.

²⁸Old Indian Trails, p. 277.

supports his statements by presenting a gift of a horse himself. Immediately "from the crowd of spectators there came the voice of another old chief singing, 'Good man, giving away your horse so generously.'"²⁹

Of course the ultimate in public recognition that could be given to a man was that he would be accepted as a chief. This, so to speak, was the final seal of approval on behavior that was culturally ideal. As Archdeacon Middleton indicates, it was a position "earned by acts of bravery and deeds of good-will which were recognized with respect by his tribesmen."³⁰

While the role of women was subordinate to that of the men, there, nevertheless, was public recognition given female behavior that was in accord with the desired patterns. The principal means of recognizing ideal behavior in a woman was through the position of "medicine women", the chief functionary in the Blackfoot sun dance. This woman, who was the object of honor and veneration from the entire tribe,³¹ could be any female member of the Blackfoot as

²⁹The Old North Trail, p. 277.

³⁰S. H. Middleton, Kainai Chieftainship (Lethbridge: The Lethbridge Herald, 1952), p. 12.

³¹The Old North Trail, p. 315.

long as her life had corresponded to the cultural ideal held for the behavior of women. McClintock notes this:

To be eligible as sacred women they were required to have led perfectly pure lives before the entire tribe, and they must also be known for their kindness of heart towards everyone.³²

Through this recognition given in a public and ceremonial manner, the youth of Blackfoot society were inspired to imitate the actions of the models thus held before them. Furthermore, evidence indicates that these models of desirable behavior were consciously used as teaching devices, the attention of the young being deliberately directed towards them. This is indicated for boys in the following statement:

As he grew older the boy's father and other male relatives pointed out to him the most distinguished warriors at the Sun Dance encampments and recited their deeds of valor to him as an encouragement to the lad to emulate their worthy actions.³³

The same thing was true with reference to the education of girls:

³²Ibid., p. 88.

³³Ewers, The Horse In Blackfoot Indian Culture, p. 214.

Parents pointed to the sacred woman as a notable example for their daughters to imitate, that, like her, they might be esteemed as above reproach.³⁴

This was a conscious and deliberate use of those tribal members whose conduct had approached the ideal of Blackfoot behavior, as prestige examples indicating to the Indian boys and girls the actions they should strive to imitate.

Praise and ridicule. If certain behavior results in satisfaction to the human organism, the use of this behavior is reinforced. This is based on the psychologically supported theory of learning which holds that the behavior of children may be conditioned by the use of rewards and punishments. Lindgren explains it in the following terms:

The idea is that if good or satisfactory behavior is rewarded and bad or unsatisfactory behavior is punished, good behavior will be strengthened and bad behavior will be weakened and may drop out. Children are thus said to be "conditioned" in favor of good behavior and against bad behavior.³⁵

Thus, praise which is psychologically satisfying to

³⁴McClintock, The Old North Trail, p. 185.

³⁵Henry C. Lindgren, Mental Health in Education (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1954), p. 290.

the young of any society encourages the modification of behavior into patterns that bring about this type of reward. Among the Blackfoot, a system of rewarding through the use of praise was most highly developed. The effectiveness of this as an educative process was ensured by conditioning the youngsters to praise and ridicule almost from birth on, and by utilizing the cooperation of the entire tribe in applying this technique.

As was indicated in the foregoing discussion on public recognition of desired behavior traits, great attention was given to praise, privilege and prestige on a tribal basis as a reward for the attainment of cultural ideals. This public and often ceremonial recognition was in itself an indication of the important function praise played in the preparation of individuals for group membership. It permeated all aspects of their life and was one of the most important and continuous methods employed in Blackfoot education. That it had deep significance for the youngsters is indicated by Long Lance in his description of the boys returning to camp following one of their mock battles:

When we returned to our camp in the afternoon and displayed our five biggest braves, our elders would pat their backs and tell them that some

day they would be great warriors like their fathers; and we youngsters used to take this very seriously.³⁶

George Pettitt sums up the educational importance of praise in the following terms:

It can be safely affirmed that primitive pedagogy accepted as one of its unformulated axioms the efficacy of linking desired behavior with praise, preferably of a public and ceremonial character.³⁷

Praise seemed to precede ridicule in the life of the Indian child and take precedence in the reaction of the group to the individual. This is indicated by the widespread use of the former. However, the use of ridicule as a means of ensuring that the individual conformed to the cultural patterns of his tribe was widely found among all North American Indians. Wissler states that "the whole control of the local group in aboriginal days seems to have been exercised by admonition and mild ridicule instead of by force and punishment."³⁸

Evidence indicates that the Blackfoot employed ridicule as a powerful means of producing social conformity.

³⁶Op. cit., p. 38.

³⁷Op. cit., p. 50.

³⁸Clark Wissler, The American Indian (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 191.

Schultz relates how his Indian wife was found in tears because the other women were laughing at her for failing to engage in the appropriate feminine occupations.³⁹ Ewers explains that a lazy fellow who failed to do his share of work on a hunting expedition or war party was subject to ridicule that might eventually force him to leave the group. When he returned home, he became an object of ridicule to the entire tribe.⁴⁰ No one was exempt from this social pressure and even a chief could experience it. An unpopular chief, whom perhaps no one dared ridicule to his face, would be subjected to the ignominy, one dark night, of having a wild colt, which had been given a sound smack on the hindquarters, headed through his lodge entrance.⁴¹

One group who frequently used ridicule in the social control of the young men were the women and girls. Long Lance describes the incentive to acquire riding and hunting skills provided to the Blood youth by means of the laughter and teasing of the girls.⁴²

Ridicule, then, followed and supplemented praise. It was both a deterrent and a stimulus in guiding the

³⁹Op. cit., p. 173.

⁴⁰The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, pp. 130-31.

⁴¹McClintock, The Old North Trail, p. 298.

⁴²Op. cit., pp. 106-07.

young into the right behavior patterns. The possibility of arousing it deterred the Blackfoot young from actions deemed undesirable by the tribe. When aroused it became an incentive for achieving that which would reduce or remove it. This, of course, would be the behavior ideals of the group.

Privileges of maturity. Another aspect of the process of educating the Blackfoot youth, which indicates how little was actually left to spontaneous imitation, is that of associating definite privileges with the various achievements that taken together are a measure of one's maturity. These were definite steps taken to encourage proficiency in the skills and techniques necessary for self-support, and preservation of the tribe as a whole, on the part of the rising generation.

The basic criterion of maturity seems to have been productive achievement. Boys and girls tended to learn new skills and to take on new responsibilities just as soon as they demonstrated their ability to handle them. The final test of maturity or of ability in any line of endeavour was a demonstration of the strength, skill or behavior required. Actual achievement was the basic indicator of readiness and with regard to the age at which

a child was expected to begin certain activities Pettitt states that "primitive people very seldom knew or cared about exact chronological age."⁴³

To promote within the child the desire for progress towards maturity through the acquisition of the attributes associated with an ideal man or woman, the Blackfoot held out a system of incentives. These were various privileges of maturity. There was a socially recognized ladder of privilege up which the individual climbed by progressive achievement of the valued components of mature behavior.

Youngsters were under many restrictions. They could not indulge in fat meats and other luxuries. Neither could they stand close to the fire when they were cold.⁴⁴ Until a boy had gained a certain level of social recognition his name was not called out in public,⁴⁵ and at feasts he had to sit near the door.⁴⁶ Young boys were not allowed to hunt with the men, but rode after the running herd attempting to shoot the calves left in the wake. It was not until they had gained skill and confidence as indicated by their

⁴³Op. cit., p. 85.

⁴⁴Long Lance, op. cit., p. 41.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 42.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 43.

successes that they were allowed to begin hunting adult buffalo.⁴⁷ When a youth was first accepted as a member of a war party, his role was close to that of a servant:

The boys performed the duties of cooking, carrying wood and water, and carrying the men's packs. Sometimes they were permitted to hold the horses cut loose from pickets when the warriors brought them out of camp. Sometimes they assisted in running off grazing horses outside the camp.⁴⁸

A young man was expected to be able to "count a coup" before acquiring the right to take a wife,⁴⁹ and only the sons of a wealthy man could look forward to a good marriage before they had begun to accumulate a herd of horses through their raiding exploits.⁵⁰ The desire for membership in the various men's societies was a further stimulus prompting the youth to seek successively higher levels of mature behavior.⁵¹

Thus, Blackfoot childhood was not permitted to be an unadulterated pleasure which the individual would dislike to leave. Restrictions were numerous enough to make it desirable to acquire the skills and status of a mature person. Moreover, this process of maturation was not only

⁴⁷Ewers, The Horse In Blackfoot Indian Culture, p. 159.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 190-91.

⁴⁹Schultz, op. cit., p. 97.

⁵⁰Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, p. 104.

⁵¹Grinnell, op. cit., pp. 221-22.

distinguished by the sequential removal of restrictions, but was also supported by the granting of public recognition and reward in the form of social privileges and decorative rights. For example, a boy whose behavior was exemplary would be allowed to wear locks of colored badger hair. "This was a sign of distinction among youngsters not yet old enough to wear the eagle-feather trophies awarded to those who won distinction on the warpath."⁵²

Summary. In summary, then, the cultural ideals that were to be taught to the Blackfoot young were recognized in tangible and important ways, with the result that there was little confusion of purpose generated in the minds of the children, for they saw that the achievement of these ideals guaranteed power, prestige and other social rewards. Imitation was an operating educational process, but it was given direction by psychologically effective incentives that fostered growth in the behavior patterns necessary for membership in Blackfoot society.

⁵²Long Lance, op. cit., p. 24.

III. DISCIPLINE

Probably no trait of Indian societies in North America has been more generally commented upon by observers than that of parental indulgence of children. As has been noted, it even led some people to conclude that these children were, indeed, being very badly brought up.⁵³ While there were exceptions, in general it was true that Indian parents had a tolerant attitude toward their children. Grinnell comments that:

Indians never whip their children, nor punish them in any way. Sometimes a mother irritated by the resistance of a yelling child, will give it an impatient shake by one arm as she drags it along, but I have never witnessed anything in the nature of the punishment of a child by a parent.⁵⁴

However, to hold that this was an abnormal abstract fondness for children is an erroneous assumption. As Pettitt indicates it was in fact a "conditioned social reflex deriving from many other beliefs and practices making up the culture."⁵⁵

⁵³Supra, p. 50.

⁵⁴George B. Grinnell, Pawnee, Blackfoot and Cheyenne (New York: Charles Scribner's Son's, 1961), p. 189.

⁵⁵Op. cit., p. 7.

Absence of Physical Punishment

That physical punishment was little used as a disciplinary measure may stem, in part, from the fact that pain was of little use as a fear producing, coercive force in a society which valued the ability to withstand pain and suffering without flinching. Chief Long Lance narrates how the Blood youths were whipped by their fathers every morning to toughen their bodies. He states that "far from disliking this sort of treatment, we youngsters used to display the welts on our bodies with great pride. Sometimes we would actually ask for more."⁵⁶

In addition whipping was sometimes a group game in which the Blackfoot boys sought to wear out the whipper or the whip. Each youth tried to endure more than the others, and if he persevered until the switches were worn off the whip, he was given the stub which was kept and displayed with considerable pride.⁵⁷

Another feature of Plains Indian culture which inhibited the use of corporal punishment or even severe verbal chastisement was the close linking of childhood with the supernatural world. The child was of necessity

⁵⁶Op. cit., p. 18.

⁵⁷Ibid.

treated with respect and kindness lest he return to the spirit world.⁵⁸

Also the desire to maintain the close family unity and solidarity characteristic of the Blackfoot was a factor which tended to limit physical or rigorous means of discipline within the family group. Parents looked forward to the love and support of their children,⁵⁹ and in a way of life marked by many dangers and uncertainties, did all in their power to foster the measure of security that close family ties could provide.

Functioning Disciplinary Pressures

However, while rigid family disciplinary training may have been lacking and the children treated with apparent indulgence, this in no way indicates that Blackfoot youngsters were allowed to grow up in an undirected fashion. The parents own social status, their prestige based on having good children, was an incentive to see that their sons and daughters were brought up according to culturally valued patterns. The means used to enforce conformity with these patterns were in fact disciplinary pressures.

⁵⁸Pettitt, op. cit., p. 9.

⁵⁹Schultz, op. cit., p. 201.

The most significant features of the Blackfoot practices were the tendency to refer discipline, or the authority for it, to some individual or agency outside of the immediate family, and the tendency to rely on the supernatural as the ultimate reference. In this way family solidarity was maintained by referring all threats of punishment to outside authorities. This reserved to those most intimately concerned with the allegiance of the youth, the pleasantest educational tasks and placed the responsibility for the unpleasant duties upon some outside individual or agency. The desired family unity was thus preserved, and yet, conformity to collective behavior patterns was ensured.

Relatives. Clark Wissler makes the general statement: "Wherever we have data parents almost never punish or even severely reprove, but such pressure as may be needed is exercised by certain relatives."⁶⁰

While this statement, taken by itself, is not quite correct for the use of disciplinary pressure is not limited to relatives, it does serve to indicate the educative importance of relatives. In this regard Pettitt notes one of the

⁶⁰Op. cit., p. 190.

significant features of Indian education in primitive North America was the frequency with which the child's uncle functioned as a disciplinarian and teacher.⁶¹ That the uncle was an important educational figure in Blackfoot society is evident. If a wife's husband was cruel, her brother would take her back to her family and the marriage was dissolved.⁶² In the event of the death of the father, the boy's uncle might take over his training and raise the youngster as his own son.⁶³ Red Crow, the Blood Chief, in narrating his life story refers to his uncle's lodge as "my home."⁶⁴ It was frequently the boy's uncle who took him on his first war party and sponsored and instructed him.⁶⁵ A girl might also expect to be guided by her uncle.⁶⁶

Tribal elders. However, the uncle was not the only teacher in the Indian community. Grandparents were favorite assistants and consultants and frequent mention

⁶¹Op. cit., p. 18.

⁶²Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, p. 100.

⁶³Schultz, op. cit., pp. 349-51.

⁶⁴Middleton, op. cit., p. 121.

⁶⁵Wissler in Pettitt, op. cit., p. 20.

⁶⁶Schultz, op. cit., p. 189.

is made of them being associated with the children.⁶⁷ On occasion they might also raise an orphaned youngster,⁶⁸ but most frequently they functioned in their capacity as respected elders. The Blackfoot attitude towards old people is reflected by Long Lance:

This respect for the aged was so deeply bred into us that to this day I have not the courage to dispute the word of an old person. To me old people still are demi-gods to be heeded and revered at all times.⁶⁹

These elders lectured the young on how to live,⁷⁰ and when the occasion required they would even remind them of their manners by rapping them on the head with a long stick.⁷¹

The uncle, however, played an unexpectedly important role, for he was ordinarily not old enough to be among the most respected tribal elders as were the grandparents, and he functioned, apparently, because of his relationship rather than because of societal or other connections.

⁶⁷Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, p. 146; McClintock, The Old North Trail, p. 431.

⁶⁸George Catlin, North American Indians (Edinburg: John Grant, 1926), Vol 1, pp. 34-35.

⁶⁹Op. cit., p. 42.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 41.

⁷¹Grinnell, Pawnee, Blackfoot and Cheyenne, p. 93.

The age-graded societies. The age-graded societies of the Blackfoot took over many of the disciplinary functions. Their activities ranged from promoting the development of desirable personal traits to actual policing of the behavior of the tribe. For example, the Mosquito Society after their dance would scatter throughout the camp frightening children into approved behavior patterns. In their elaborate costumes they must have presented a terrifying spectacle to a youngster, yet, if the child cried, ran away or tried to hide, he was punished by being scratched with the eagle claws which the society members wore.⁷² Youths who disturbed the camp by making noise at night or through playing rough practical jokes, could be subject to harsh discipline, even to a severe whipping.⁷³ The societies also functioned in disciplining the women. If a wife were unfaithful to her husband, she was punished by having her nose cut off by the members of one of the policing groups.⁷⁴ Schultz describes how all the women were forced to view such a punishment and how the chief

⁷²McClintock, The Old North Trail, pp. 448-49.

⁷³Grinnell, Blackfoot Lodge Tales, The Story of a Prairie People, pp. 222-23.

⁷⁴McClintock, The Old North Trail, p. 185.

made a speech pointing out the seriousness of such a crime.⁷⁵ That this was a shocking and lasting disciplinary example to the girls and women of the tribe is evidenced by statements such as the following:

So it was that Otahki became one of that despised little group of cut-nosed women of the tribe--women with whom the good women would not associate; women who were refused the comfort of entering Sun's lodge and making offerings to Those Above. Daily from lodge to lodge they begged for work and food and the privilege of sleeping near the doorway. None liked to look at them, so closely did their faces resemble the face of a human skull.

No wonder that the women of the Blackfoot tribes were with few exceptions, extremely virtuous.⁷⁶

The supernatural. As the supernatural permeated all aspects of their life, the Indian people did not separate religious and other types of education into separate pedagogical subjects. While many authorities in writing on primitive education discuss religious training under a separate heading, this is making a distinction not found in the society itself. Thus, among the

⁷⁵Op. cit., pp. 113-15.

⁷⁶James W. Schultz, Blackfeet and Buffalo (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), p. 243.

Blackfoot, all things were associated with the supernatural and this knowledge was imparted to the young along with the natural.

In thus teaching their supernatural beliefs and practices, a procedure was being utilized which lent readier acceptance and greater effectiveness to the entire teaching program. This was based on the fact that the people were inclined to accept things supported by supernatural explanations. By transmitting to the young a belief in the reality of the supernatural an effective educational support was made available, particularly with respect to discipline and coercion toward desired behavior. This reference of disciplinary authority to supernatural agencies was especially effective for a supernatural had the power to detect and punish transgressions that might be concealed from other human beings.

Among the Blackfoot the importance of the supernatural in disciplining the young is very much in evidence. Certain forms of behavior would bring an unavoidable and immediate punishment from an undefined spiritual power. If the children neglected their lodge duty of tending the fire in winter, they would be afflicted with scabs or itch.⁷⁷

⁷⁷Grinnell, Pawnee, Blackfoot and Cheyenne, p. 94.

A girl who attempted to do quillwork without having been ceremonially instructed would go blind or suffer from swollen fingers.⁷⁸ For a child to ride a stick horse in a lodge where a medicine man was present, would result in misfortune to the youngster.⁷⁹ A parent who did not wish a child to bother an animal the family possessed might say to it:

'Don't you dare do it; 'tis a sacred one, and if you touch it something dreadful will happen to you. Perhaps you would go blind.'⁸⁰

Known supernatural beings could also be used for disciplinary purposes. Violation of prescribed ceremonials and forms of conduct would displease them and some form of punishment would result.⁸¹ In addition the Blackfoot had a great fear of owls, believing that they were spirits of the dead who "continued revisiting their old haunts, crying dolefully through the night, and seeking to bring misfortune to the living."⁸²

⁷⁸Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, p. 119.

⁷⁹Ewers, The Horse In Blackfoot Indian Culture, p. 274.

⁸⁰Schultz, My Life As An Indian, p. 215.

⁸¹McClintock, The Old North Trail, p. 168.

⁸²Ibid., p. 477.

To call to the child's attention the fact that the owls would be attracted to his lodge if he was misbehaving was a very effective disciplinary technique.⁸³

The role of the parents. While many agencies outside the immediate family were thus involved in training and disciplining the Indian youngster, it must not be concluded that the parents were totally remiss in this regard. The mother and father undoubtedly gave as much time as anyone to the training of their children for their own standing in the tribe was affected by the behavior and success of their young. That other agencies took responsibility for the disciplining of children is true only to the extent that they worked with the parents and added support to their efforts.

An example of the form of disciplinary training the parents might engage in is given by Grinnell in the following passage:

All Indians like to see women more or less sober and serious-minded, not giggling all the time, not silly. A Blackfoot man who had two or three girls would, as they grew large, often talk to them and give them good advice.

⁸³Lowie, op. cit., p. 81.

After watching them, and taking the measure of their characters, he would one day get a buffalo's front foot and ornament it fantastically with feathers. When the time came, he would call one of his daughters to him and say to her: "Now I wish you to stand here in front of me and look me straight in the eye without laughing. No matter what I may do, do not laugh." Then he would sing a funny song, shaking the foot in the girl's face in time to the song, and looking her steadily in the eye. Very likely before he had finished, she would begin to giggle. If she did this, the father would stop singing, and tell her to finish laughing, and when she was serious again, he would again warn her not to laugh, and then would repeat his song.⁸⁴

Summary. It would appear, then, that any generalization on the lack of discipline in early Blackfoot education is more apparent than true. Children were being coerced into desired behavior patterns not by means of the restrictive actions or physical punishments of their parents, but through disciplinary authority referred to relatives, respected tribal members and the supernatural. The parents reserved to themselves the more pleasant aspects of child training and in this way established family solidarity.

⁸⁴Pawnee, Blackfoot and Cheyenne, p. 95.

IV. EDUCATIONAL FUNCTION OF NAMES

Blackfoot education for group membership sought above all else to promote individual and group security through the use of a variety of processes which fostered conformity to culturally ideal behavior. The conferring of personal names must be considered as one of the more important of these processes. George Pettitt states that in primitive societies names were educationally significant in three different ways:

- (1) by stimulating self-development and achievement through ridicule;
- (2) as a type of prestige reward for specific achievement or general good behavior and popularity; and (3) as the principle medium for transference of ready-made personalities.⁸⁵

How well an Indian was living up to cultural expectations was at once apparent not only to the individual but to the whole tribe, by reason of the name bestowed upon him by his group. Long Lance states that:

In the civilization in which we now live, a man may be one thing and appear to be another. But this is not possible in the social structure of the Indian because an Indian's name tells the world what he is: a coward, a liar, a thief or a brave.⁸⁶

⁸⁵Op. cit., p. 60.

⁸⁶Op. cit., p. 48.

Utilized in this way the process of naming becomes a powerful incentive, stimulating the individual to seek to conform with cultural ideals and to avoid undesirable behavior. He knows that the former brings public recognition through the awarding of an honorable name, while the latter results in the application of an unflattering label.

Ridicule Through Naming

The Blackfoot use of nicknames, trivial or ridiculous, is frequently mentioned. A child was given a serious name but he also had a "funny" name conferred upon him, calling attention to some idiosyncrasy or physical peculiarity. Thus, he might be called Bow Legs, Crooked Nose or Bad Boy.⁸⁷ These nicknames usually stuck with the individual until he distinguished himself in some way. A boy going on the warpath for the first time received a name usually of a ridiculous nature, which he had to carry with good grace until he proved his right to a better one. The functional value of these nicknames as a stimulous to learning and achievement is demonstrated by the statement of Red Crow:

When I first took the war trail, my name was changed to "Lately Tom," which name I greatly disliked and did my best to

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 49.

throw off and repudiate; but in spite of my known disgust I bore the name for many years until I became known as Red Crow, the former name of an old relative.⁸⁸

Ridiculous nicknames were also applied whenever an individual failed to live up to the behavior expectations of Blackfoot society. Long Lance tells of a youth called Falling Snow because of his inability to stay on a horse.⁸⁹ The incident of a young man attempting to avoid sharing his freshly killed meat with an old couple by lying down beside the carcass is related by John Ewers.⁹⁰ For his failure to live up to the Blackfoot ideal of generosity, this man was nicknamed Playing-Dead-Beside-the-Buffalo.

Names As Prestige Rewards

Coupled with this use of ridiculous names to stimulate self-development and achievement was the utilization of personal names as prestige rewards for the attainment of culturally ideal behavior. This also was a cultural element with important educational connotations. It was based on the practice of matching the individual's development with names of even greater significance. This was one of the forms of public

⁸⁸Middleton, op. cit., p. 116.

⁸⁹Op. cit., p. 110.

⁹⁰The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, p. 82.

recognition or reward for distinguished achievement in culturally valued fields of activity. Thus, while the names of women were not usually changed after childhood, a man might have a succession of names commemorating deeds of valour and notable events.⁹¹

S. H. Middleton gives an example of names functioning as a means of publicly recognizing ideal behaviour when he narrates the story of the Blood warrior who raced far in advance of his tribesmen in a battle with the Prend d'Oreilles. Following the successful conclusion of this fight the brave's name was changed from Round Nose to Chief Mountain.⁹² This latter name was a very prominent one, referring to a sacred mountain in the southern Rockies.

While every Indian desired the possession of a good name, the conferring of, or obtaining of, one involved public approval of the recipient. This is particularly stressed by Chief Buffalo Child. He states that names were not conferred by the family but by the tribe, and that the degree of distinction won by the individual

⁹¹McClintock, The Old North Trail, pp. 399-400.

⁹²Op. cit., p. 111.

determined the "goodness" of the names accorded to him. Some great warriors had as many as twelve names, each one better than the one that preceded it. Even a father could not pass on his own name to a son unless the tribe requested him to do so, and that was one of the highest honors that could come to a boy.⁹³

The awarding of names, then, was a cultural means of encouraging and rewarding publicly, individuals who were living up to cultural ideals. It was a means of bringing about conformity of the individual to group values and behavior and, as such, was of educational significance.

The Transference of Personalities

The process of naming was also important in that it was associated in some mysterious way with the transfer of personality attributes and spiritual power. The Blackfoot employed the practice of conferring the name of an ancestor for the purpose of transferring to the child the characteristic traits and power of that particular ancestor.⁹⁴ In this way the Indian youngster was not receiving an empty name but a personality and a reputation backed by numerous stories of

⁹³Long Lance, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

⁹⁴Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, p. 101.

what his namesake had accomplished, how he had behaved, what people thought of him, where he had received his power from and so forth.⁹⁵ Thus a renowned name provided the individual not only with a sense of confidence and well-being, but also with a model of culturally ideal behaviour. This use of names is evident in Schultz's narration of the Blackfoot naming George Bird Grinnell:

"Yes, and it must be a powerful name that we give him, a name that will help him to survive all dangers, and attain old age," Saiyi put in. At once the circle gave earnest thought to it. Name after name was proposed and for one reason and another rejected until, at last, Tail-Feathers-Coming-Over-the-Hill mentioned one that all approved. Whereat he said to Grinnell: "True friend come to us from far, several winters back one of our number died in very old age. He was very wise and of kindly heart, ever helpful to the sick, to helpless widows and fatherless children. Brave he was, a great warrior, victor in many battles with our enemies. He had a very powerful name from a very sacred animal that Sun loves. Without doubt a powerful sacred name. Helpful friend, come to us from far, we give you that name. You are Fisher Hat."⁹⁶

In a similar manner, great care was taken in choosing those who would give a name to the child. When a youngster was given its first serious name, it was the

⁹⁵McClintock, The Old North Trail, pp. 418-22.

⁹⁶Blackfeet and Buffalo, p. 85.

custom to have it conferred by a man or woman of distinction and high reputation.⁹⁷ It was believed that its transfer in this way would give to the child something of the power and personality of the donor.⁹⁸ This was educationally significant for by the simple process of impressing on the child that his name had come from such and such a person, that this person was a most remarkable individual, and that it was the child's privilege to be the same because of the name given, desired behavior could be stimulated and directed.

Summary. Thus it is possible to conclude that the Blackfoot had developed naming practices which were a fundamental aid in educating their children and in passing on to them certain cultural values. They were an effective means of developing character and promoting personality formation of the ideal type. This is another example of psychologically based mechanisms functioning in an educative capacity.

V. STORYTELLING

Among the Blackfoot People one cannot fail to note the importance of storytelling as a pedagogical device.

⁹⁷Ewers, loc. cit.

⁹⁸McClintock, The Old North Trail, p. 396.

If, under this heading, consideration is given to the entire range of oral literature, its function in preparing individuals for group membership was significant indeed. In a society that had no written communication to speak of, the story played a major role in transmitting tribal history, values and ways of living. It was a means of lending support to all other aspects of the educational system.

While a number of authorities have recorded the myths, legends and folktales of the Blackfoot people,⁹⁹ these are not, in any true sense, representative of the entire body of oral literature. They are an important part, but only a part. There were a great number of lesser stories, often merely anecdotal, concerned with particular families, individual biographies or historical episodes, and these were also of significance in Blackfoot education. In fact, their significance increases when one realizes that during many months of the year, the sacred legends and myths could be no more than alluded to as references, for the Indians believed "that they should be told after dark and in the winter time."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹Grinnell in Blackfoot Lodge Tales and Pawnee, Blackfoot and Cheyenne; McClintock in The Old North Trail; Ewers in The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture; and James W. Schultz in Blackfoot Tales of Glacier National Park (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916).

¹⁰⁰McClintock, The Old North Trail, p. 132.

George Pettitt makes use of the following comparison in indicating the fallacy of limiting Indian oral literature to myths and legends:

Consequently, to speak of the oral literature of the Indians solely in terms of myths and legends is akin to speaking of English literature in terms of the King James version of the Bible, Chaucer and Shakespeare.¹⁰¹

Transmitting Tribal History

One important function of storytelling was that it was a means of transmitting tribal history. McClintock relates how the aged chief Brings-Down-The-Sun was the repository of the tribal records and how he had received this information from his father.¹⁰² That the transmission of this knowledge was an important part of the Indian youth's education and not left to chance is indicated by George Grinnell:

Since they had no written characters their history was wholly traditional, handed down from one generation to another by word of mouth. The elder, who transmitted these accounts to younger people, solemnly impressed upon his hearers the importance of repeating the story just as it had been told to them. . . . The learning of these stories must have been fine training for the memory of the young, who were frequently examined by their elders to see how completely they had assimilated the tales so often repeated to them.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹Op. cit., p. 157.

¹⁰²The Old North Trail, p. 417.

¹⁰³Pawnee, Blackfoot and Cheyenne, p. 209.

A frequent method employed by the Blackfoot for reckoning time and recording history was the "winter counts". These were kept by a number of different men and in them "one outstanding event was recorded for each year and if nothing occurred which affected the whole tribe, a local or personal incident was recorded."¹⁰⁴

A paper published by the Glenbow Foundation, gives the winter count kept by the Blood Chief Bad Head for the years 1810 to 1883. While a number of others have been preserved, this is the only known instance where a Blackfoot winter count was painted on a skin. All others preserved were retained in the memories of their owners.¹⁰⁵ This is a further indication of the importance of oral transmission in teaching of tribal history.

Stimulating Self-development

The oral literature of the Blackfoot also functioned as an effective means of stimulating the self-development of the boy or girl. The stories a child hear concerning the name he bore and the new ones that he might win; the stories of how other specific individuals had achieved success in vision quests; of how men had built their reputations in the

¹⁰⁴Hugh A. Dempsey, A Blackfoot Winter Count, Occasional Paper No. 1 (Calgary: Glenbow Foundation, 1965), p. 3.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., pp. 3-4.

chase or on the warpath; of how girls won and held good husbands or acquired respected reputations; these all served to orientate the individual toward the values and behaviors he was expected to exhibit as a functioning member of his group.

Thus, Ewers relates that "the hero-worshipping youth was told again and again the stirring narratives of the outstanding fighting men of his tribe, both past and present."¹⁰⁶

There is also evidence that these stories might be autobiographical in nature:

Morning Eagle a noted old warrior and the hero of many battles, led through the camp his old white war-horse, decorated with medicine emblems and picture writings, representing his achievements in early days, while in a loud voice he called the people's attention to his "advertising horse" and proclaimed his deeds of valour.¹⁰⁷

It is worth noting that it was generally the old men who functioned as storytellers and many "were masters of the art of telling a good story."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, p. 103.

¹⁰⁷McClintock, The Old North Trail, pp. 226-27.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 106.

Grinnell describes the extent of their skill in the following terms:

I have seen these storytellers so much in earnest, so entirely carried away by the tale they were relating, that they fairly trembled with excitement. They held their little audiences spellbound. The women dropped their half-sewn moccasin from their listless hands, and the men let the pipe go out.¹⁰⁹

Authority for Cultural Beliefs and Practices

With such significance attached to storytelling, it was possible for the Blackfoot to use myths and legends as an authority for cultural beliefs and practices which were being taught in other ways. Malinowski presents this point of view when he comments that among primitive peoples it is the function of myths to substantiate belief, enhance moral precepts, give validity to faith, and give weight to all that has to be believed, obeyed or accepted.¹¹⁰

Thus, the many tribal stories were actual teaching devices. Through them the Blackfoot children were taught that a person who lived up to cultural ideals could expect

¹⁰⁹Pawnee, Blackfoot and Cheyenne, p. 91.

¹¹⁰Bronislaw Malinowski, Myth in Primitive Psychology (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1926), pp. 87-94.

a happy and rewarding life; a person who misbehaved would be subject to misfortune and grief. While a great number of the recorded stories illustrate this fact, the tale of "Bad Wife" as related by James Willard Schultz, serves as an example. A young man, described as a very brave and successful warrior noted for his kindness, marries a beautiful girl who later attempts to betray him to his enemies. The youth thwarts her plans, kills his foe and wins many possessions and great honor for himself. The girl is punished by being publicly shamed and then killed by her father.¹¹¹

Explanatory Content

Blackfoot myths and legends were also characterized by a degree of explanatory content. That is, episodes in the stories were used to explain why things exist in their known form. These ranged all the way from an explanation of the origin of the sun dance,¹¹² to an explanation of the creation of the world,¹¹³ to a description of why

¹¹¹Blackfeet Tales of Glacier National Park, pp. 85-96.

¹¹²Middleton, op. cit., pp. 75-81.

¹¹³Grinnell, Blackfoot Lodge Tales, The Story of a Prairie People, p. 137.

rabbits have two layers of fat on their backs.¹¹⁴ Also, "many of the Blackfoot legends relate to the origin of their medicines, and the manner in which supernatural power was transmitted to men by the Sun."¹¹⁵

Conclusion

Stories, then, played an important part in the education of the Indian youngsters. Long Lance sums up their importance in the following manner:

We had no Bible as the white boys have, so our mothers trained us to live right by telling us legends of how all of the good things started to be good. We had a legend for everything--from the care of the feet to the great shame befalling those who tell lies. Many long winter afternoons we would sit around our mother as she made skins into clothing, and listen to the magic stories of righteousness which she passed on to us from the dark unknown depths of our history.¹¹⁶

There is further evidence to support the conclusion that these myths and legends served to perform an educational function. This is based on the fact that they seem to have been adapted to meet the demands of young audiences. It is significant to note that in a great many of these stories the leading characters are children or young people. For example in Schultz's collection of

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 152.

¹¹⁵McClintock, The Old North Trail, p. 352.

¹¹⁶Op. cit., p. 121.

Blackfoot tales eight out of the 12 stories recorded are concerned with young people.¹¹⁷ Discounting the tales concerning "Old Man", 11 of the 18 stories recorded by Grinnell have Blackfoot young as their heroes.¹¹⁸ This frequent occurrence of young people as leading characters seems to indicate that myths and legends have been adapted to meet the problem of holding the interest of children and of enculcating traditional beliefs in the minds of the immature. In other words, stories used as educational devices in training the children, were found to be most effective when they tended to deal with children.

VI. THE VISION QUEST AND THE GUARDIAN SPIRIT

Of wide distribution and intensive development in North America, the "vision quest" and the acquisition of a "guardian spirit" played a significant part in the intellectual and emotional development of the Blackfoot people. As was indicated previously,¹¹⁹ this was not a separate category of education which might properly be labelled "religious". The Indians had no specifically

¹¹⁷Blackfeet Tales of Glacier National Park.

¹¹⁸Blackfoot Lodge Tales, The Story of a Prairie People.

¹¹⁹Supra, p. 92.

named conceptual category equivalent to what we term religion.¹²⁰ That which is more properly referred to as supernaturalism¹²¹ was too much an integral part of their material life to be separated from it.

To the Blackfoot the supernatural was not something focusing on escape from the things of this world. As McClintock explains:

The Blackfeet do not have a cheerful or hopeful conception of the future life. They believe that, after death, the spirit goes eastward to the Sand Hills, a very dreary alkali country on the plains. It is inhabited by the ghosts of people and animals, which exist together, very much the same as in life.¹²²

Rather than looking ahead to this "shadow" existence, the Blackfeet utilized supernatural concepts in a practical attempt to give greater assurance of achieving success in the affairs of this life. Morals and ethics were linked with supernatural practices and beliefs,¹²³ but not so much through a fear of the hereafter as through a desire to establish a relationship with the supernaturals, whereby

¹²⁰Pettitt, op. cit., p. 88.

¹²¹Supra, 55.

¹²²McClintock, The Old North Trail, p. 148.

¹²³The requirements for the sacred woman of the sun dance may be considered an example.

success in the daily routine could be achieved. The focus was on the immediate future and the function that the supernatural could perform in aiding the individual to successfully meet this future. This attitude on the part of the Blackfoot is well illustrated by Ewers quoting from a letter of Father Nicholas Point, a missionary among the Blackfoot, to his superior Father Pierre Jean De Smet. The Priest complains that while he could baptize many of the adult Indians, the only reason they desired the sacrament was to enable them to kill their enemies. They were in no sense truly converted to Christianity and were interested only if its practices were useful in immediately making great men of them.¹²⁴

The Educative Function of Supernaturalism

The educative function of supernaturalism, then, was not to produce a discipline of religious faith, but to produce a self-confident, self-reliant member of the group. Through these practices and beliefs the Blackfoot youth were given an inner conviction of their ability to meet any and all situations. To be a successful member of the tribe and live up to cultural ideals, it was only necessary that the

¹²⁴The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, p. 191.

individual acquire and retain the requisite spiritual power or "medicine". That the belief in the possession of this power was significant in promoting the confidence necessary for cultural behavior is indicated by Ewers in the following statement:

The seasoned Blackfoot raider was a courageous, alert, resourceful fighting man. Nevertheless, he did not attribute his success in war to these qualities. Rather he attributed it to the power of his war medicine. No leader or active member of a war party took the field without his war medicine. It would both protect him from harm and insure his success in his hazardous adventure.¹²⁵

Acquiring Supernatural Power

The process of acquiring this power which was so significant in an individual's development, started in early childhood and continued through maturity. While there were a number of ways in which it could be obtained,¹²⁶ of major importance was the vision quest and the acquisition of a guardian spirit.

Dreams. Basic to an understanding of the powerful influence exerted on the lives of the Blackfoot by dreams

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 127.

¹²⁶Naming practices which involved transmitting a share of the power of the person, animal or thing an individual is named after, are an example of other means of obtaining power.

or visions, is the fact that for them these were actual experiences. Schultz explains their attitude in the following terms:

The Blackfoot believe that, when they lie down to sleep, their shadows, or, as we say, their souls, their spiritualities, leave the body and go on far adventure. Their name for this is Ni-pup'-o-kan (my dream; my vision); and when they awake they really believe that they have experienced all the incidents of their dreams, and relate them as having been of actual fact.¹²⁷

The young Indian, then, through dreaming of some spirit or animal could actually receive supernatural power from this source. This was usually given together with complete instructions for making the sacred symbols of this power and for its use. George Catlin describes how this experience was sought:

A boy, at the age of fourteen or fifteen years, is said to be making or "forming his medicine," when he wanders away from his father's lodge and absents himself for the space of two or three, and sometimes even four or five days; lying on the ground in some remote or secluded spot, crying to the Great Spirit and fasting the whole time. During this period of peril and abstinence, when he falls asleep, the first animal, bird, or reptile, of which he dreams (or pretends

¹²⁷Blackfeet Tales of Glacier National Park,
p. 201.

to have dreamed, perhaps), he considers the Great Spirit has designated for his mysterious protector through life.¹²⁸

The importance the Blackfoot attached to this type of vision as the actual basis of an individual's success is indicated by Schultz in his narration of the life of a Piegan named Miah. This man had experienced continuous bad luck in all he attempted until he had a vision on the top of Chief Mountain. Here he received a guardian spirit and the results may be summed up in his own words:

As you all know eleven enemies I have killed and more than one hundred enemy horses taken, all that because of my vision on top of Chief Mountain.¹²⁹

Preparation for the dream experience. The beginning of the desire to have a dream cannot be ascribed to individual initiative or imitation. This experience, so important in the education of the young Indian, was urged upon the child and from his earliest years he was conditioned to the vital importance of having a vision. In other words, Blackfoot children were carefully trained

¹²⁸Catlin, op. cit., p. 42.

¹²⁹Blackfeet and Buffalo, p. 337.

for the vision quest from a very early age. A boy grew up constantly hearing that all success in life was derived through power obtained from supernaturals by means of dreams. The myths and legends told by his people, and the accounts of the supernatural experiences of contemporary tribesmen effectively kept this before him. In addition, evidence indicates that the youth was actually instructed in the procedures to follow in seeking a dream and a guardian spirit. Clark Wissler states that "a youth is likely to be directed by a man of medicine experience and to be made the object of preliminary ceremonies to propitiate the dream."¹³⁰

The nature of the dream. Additional insight into the educational significance of the vision quest and the acquisition of a guardian spirit may be obtained from a consideration of the nature of the dream supposedly obtained by the Indians. It was not usually elaborated upon at once but at a later date and in accord with culturally defined patterns that the individual has been conditioned to. In other words, the cultural pattern

¹³⁰Clark Wissler, "The Social Life of the Blackfoot Indian," in The Golden Age of American Anthropology, ed. by Margaret Mead and Robert Bunzel (New York: George Braziller, 1960), p. 353.

of the vision and the guardian spirit were not necessarily achieved during the quest, but were a later rationalization of experiences during the quest which were probably quite simple. In support of this contention, evidence is found which indicates that a youth was never called upon to relate his vision experience immediately, but held it secret.¹³¹ At a later date, that which Wissler terms the dream "ritual"--consisting of a narrative, one or more songs, certain behaviour requirements, and a symbol with accessories--was formulated.¹³² That this was not a literal translation of actual dream experiences but a deliberate composition in accord with cultural patterns is indicated by the fact that "unless the dreamer was a man of medicine experience or one possessing great confidence in himself, he would call upon one possessing these qualifications for advice. From what we have learned, we feel reasonably certain that the advice is, in most cases an interpretation, a deliberate composition of ritual."¹³³

¹³¹Schultz, Blackfeet and Buffalo, pp. 334-35.

¹³²"The Social Life of the Blackfoot Indian," p. 350.

¹³³Ibid., p. 351.

Education associated with the dream. The education associated with the dream quest, however, was not exclusively spiritual in nature. Through it the young were incidentally hardened to fasting, to cold and exposure, to pain, and to loneliness at night in isolated places. The general effect, even aside from obtaining a successful vision, was to form the type of character required of a Blackfoot. The various trials leading up to the dream strengthened the individual's personality and supplied him with experience in withstanding privation and physical suffering.

Failure to experience a dream. In spite of the importance attached to it, not all individuals were capable of obtaining power in this way. With reference to the vision quest, "it is said that the majority of young men fail in the ordeal as an unreasonable fear usually comes down upon them the first night, causing them to abandon their post. Even old, experienced men often find the trial more than they can bear."¹³⁴

The person who could not get power, or inner conviction, through following the normal procedures, was not

¹³⁴Ibid., p. 353.

thereby doomed to a life of misfortune. The Blackfoot believed that power could be purchased as a commodity from those who had had dreams, and that medicine obtained in this way was just as efficacious as that found for oneself. In purchasing power direct teaching was involved. The recipient had to learn the various rituals, behaviour prohibitions, songs and so forth from the original owner.¹³⁵

Summary. The evidence, then, indicates that the vision quest and the acquisition of a guardian spirit are of educational significance not as types of religious education, but as a stimulus to the development of the culturally ideal type of person. They produce an inner conviction of self-sufficiency and associated with this conviction is the belief that this self-sufficiency may be retained by the observance of various ritual practices.

¹³⁵Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, pp. 163-64.

CHAPTER V

BLACKFOOT EDUCATION: PREPARATION FOR SPECIALIZED ROLES

Within the common cultural patterns that distinguished the Blackfoot as a social group, there was a necessary functional differentiation of occupational roles. Of course, the most obvious division was that based on sex, each performing the functions considered appropriate for it. However, these distinctions were tribal-wide in nature, applying to all individuals, and were in effect the basis of the education necessary for group membership. In this chapter, the focus is on those roles that were specialized in nature and the function of relatively few people, those that could not be generalized as the concern of the group as a whole.

Roles of this type may be divided into two groups. The one includes the roles of all individuals regarded as possessing exceptional supernatural power and having the capability of performing certain intercessory functions for their fellow-tribesmen. Called "extramundane intercessors" by Pettitt,¹ they are frequently referred to as medicine men. The other group consists of roles which

¹George A. Pettitt, "Primitive Education in North America, University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology, XLIII (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), p. 105.

were not related to intercessory functions, and which were more mundane in nature.

1. ROLES OF A MUNDANE NATURE

A Chief

An individual who was recognized as a chief had a very apparent and, at the same time, important specialized role. However, the acquisition of this position was based on possession of the traits deemed culturally ideal for all men. The Blackfoot chief was merely an individual who demonstrated greater proficiency in the exercise of desired behaviors. His attainment of this role was based on public recognition of actions in close accord with cultural values.²

Specialists In Skills and Crafts

Evidence also indicates that there were recognized specialists in the skills and crafts that all tribal members were proficient in to a greater or lesser degree. Ewers states that:

Most Blackfoot men and women possessed a great deal of manual skill. Nevertheless, some individuals who specialized in particular crafts produced articles of such outstanding quality that they were sought by others. Men who painted tipis

²Supra, p. 75.

and robes were specialists. Older men who excelled as makers of bows and arrows or pipes could find ready markets for their products among their fellows. They might be paid a horse for a handsome pipe bowl and a stem or for a fine bow and a quantity of arrows. Similarly, elderly women who were expert saddlemakers or dressmakers exchanged their handicrafts for horses or other desirable articles. The Indians were proud to own well made things, and they readily distinguished between shoddy workmanship and fine craftsmanship.³

The above were crafts the Blackfoot youth acquired training in as they became members of their social group. The fact that an individual might go on to become recognized as a specialist in a particular area, was based on his interest and ability in that line of endeavour. The individual's interest stimulated him to acquire more knowledge of his craft and to refine his skill through practice. Demonstrated proficiency in these culturally based activities brought public recognition as a specialist. The resulting prestige together with the material rewards offered for his services, were further incentives for the individual to seek excellence in his work. It is worth noting that the passage quoted above indicates that these

³John C. Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), p. 123.

skilled craftsmen were frequently older people, their skill, no doubt, acquired through long years of practice.

The Men's Societies

The Blackfoot men's societies were groups with recognized special functions within tribal social organization. The noted medicine man Brings-down-the-Sun speaks of their role in the following terms:

The leading societies ruled the camp, and helped the chiefs administer public discipline. They protected the tribes sources of food and secured equal opportunities for all. They strictly enforced the rule that private advantages must be surrendered to the public good.⁴

In addition, "each club had its own songs and dances and its own customs and ceremonial rites."⁵

Joining a society brought the young man great respect and public recognition.⁶ As was indicated previously,⁷ most male Blackfoot spent a good portion of their lives seeking to advance to successively higher societal levels. However, each group had its own specific membership rules and its members were very carefully chosen. The basic requisite

⁴Walter McClintock, The Old North Trail (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1910), pp. 464-65.

⁵E. A. Corbett, Blackfoot Trails (Toronto: The MacMillan Company of Canada Limited, 1934), p. 35.

⁶Ibid., p. 36.

⁷Supra; p. 52.

was adherence to culturally ideal behavior:

To become a member of one of these bands, the young man had to be of proved bravery; he must have a good heart, honest and straightforward tongue and be of generous nature.⁸

After a boy's conduct in battle and his behavior as a member of the tribe had been observed and approved, his application for society membership would be accepted. This took the form of accepting the goods offered as the purchase price for the transfer of a society membership. The actual exchange involved considerable formal instruction. The new members were required to feast the older ones and these banquets were in effect teaching situations;

On the evenings stipulated, the sellers enjoyed their feast and began teaching the buyers the songs and dances distinctive of the society in question. To some extent the buyers would participate in the songs and dances on these occasions. . . . After the final evening of instruction, the insignia were turned over to the new members, and there was a public procession and dance by them, advertising the fact that they were henceforth the representatives of the grade just entered.⁹

While the men who had sold their rights were no longer members of that particular society and had to seek

⁸Corbett, op. cit., p. 35.

⁹Robert H. Lowie, Indians of the Plains (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1954), p. 98.

membership in the one next higher, Grinnell notes that: "Each of these societies kept some old men as members, and these old men acted as messengers, orators, and so on."¹⁰

The new members, then were not left on their own in their new position, but had available the guidance and support of an experienced individual.

Thus, the societies in preserving and augmenting rituals and passing them on to others were early educational agencies. They were retaining and transmitting knowledge and procedures needed for the performance of specialized functions in Blackfoot society.

The War Leader

Closely associated with the performance of certain special roles was the possession of the necessary spiritual power or "medicine". The prerequisite giving the individual the ability to function in a specific capacity was the acquisition of the power necessary to do so.

This was especially true with reference to the position of leader of a war party. To be recognized as a

¹⁰George B. Grinnell, Blackfoot Lodge Tales, The Story of a Prairie People (London: David Nutt, 1893), p. 222.

war leader a man had to have "strong medicine" as proven by his successes. When a man thought he had received, usually through a dream, the power to be a leader he told others. "Then the men who know him, who believe that his medicine is strong and that he will have good luck, make up their minds to follow him."¹¹

If the expedition was successful the leader's power was regarded as strong and capable of bringing good luck to the parties under his command. However, if misfortune overtook the group or if the leader acted stupidly, it meant his power was weak or had deserted him and it was time to turn to someone else. Grinnell sums up this attitude in the following statement:

They are firm believers in luck, and will follow a leader who is fortunate in his expeditions into any danger. On the other hand, if the leader of a war party loses his young men, or any of them, the people in the camp think that he is unlucky, and does not know how to lead a war party. Young men will not follow him as a leader, and he is obliged to go as a servant or scout under another leader. He is likely never again to lead a war party, having learned to distrust his luck.¹²

¹¹Ibid., p. 250.

¹²Ibid., p. 253.

Red Crow gives further evidence of this emphasis on acquired spiritual power as the basis for war leadership in his narration of his life as a warrior. He tells of the tribes abuse of the leader of an unsuccessful raiding party. When the young men set out on their next expedition he states that:

"Big Snake" asked me to take the lead in what work was before us. He said that so many people at home had wished him bad luck and abused him that he no longer had faith in his medicine. He knew that my medicine was strong, and that it would be better for us both for me to lead, which I did.¹³

This is another example of the influence of supernaturalism being brought to bear on culturally valued activities. The individual's conviction that he had been given special power assured success in battle, and the equally firm belief of his followers in the strength and protection of this medicine, prepared the Blackfoot to pursue their military objectives with fearless confidence.

II. THE BLACKFOOT MEDICINE MAN

In considering Blackfoot education for specialized roles, a major consideration is the preparation or training

¹³S. H. Middleton, Kainai Chieftainship (Lethbridge: The Lethbridge Herald, 1952), p. 128.

necessary for those assuming the role of extramundane intercessor or medicine man.

Definition of the Term Medicine

The Indians themselves did not use the word medicine, but had a word of their own construction referring to that which was possessed of the supernatural or above the mere forces of nature. Catlin tells us that the term "medicine" was applied by the Whiteman to those aspects of Indian culture concerned directly with the spiritual forces they believed in. Much of this was above the comprehension of the average individual and characterized by mysterious powers and processes. For this reason he states that the term "medicine", as commonly accepted, meant mystery and nothing else. Thus, medicine man was synonymous with mystery man.¹⁴

Other authorities, however, do not accept this explanation. McClintock states that:

When an Indian is "making medicine," he is performing mysterious ceremonies, or using other approved means for controlling the supernatural powers and averting the malevolence of the evil spirits. Some authorities have understood the word as meaning "mystery", and the medicine man as

¹⁴George Catlin, North American Indians (Edinburg: John Grant, 1926), Vol. 1, pp. 40-41.

"mystery man". But this is not an adequate expression. While there is no corresponding word in the English language to express the equivalent of the Indian idea, the phrase "supernatural power" is probably the nearest equivalent to the word "medicine," in its common Indian use.¹⁵

Medicine man, then, was a term applied to those engaged in activities related to the spiritual forces, and was used to refer to individuals who performed a number of related functions.

Importance of the Medicine Man

Among a people who believed that the supernatural was the vital factor in determining the outcome of all life's endeavours, there was a need for some medium capable of controlling, or, at least, communicating with the powers which surrounded them. While all individuals sought to establish a relationship with these forces, those who could attain a very close communion with the supernatural were recognized as occupying a special position in Blackfoot society, and theirs was probably the most important specialized role in the social life of these people. The medicine man's role has been described as follows:

The medicine man or shaman was this medium who obtained his alleged power from the

¹⁵Op. cit., p. 169.

spirits. He was a sort of middleman or agent who could, by means of his special powers and his special relationship with the supernatural world, perform many acts contrary to, or different from, normal experiences or daily events. He could read the future, make the game plentiful or the harvest insufficient, avert catastrophes, and cause droughts and floods. But his most important function was to cure or cause illness and to combat and prevent death, since it was often believed that disease and death could, by invoking the aid of spirits through the medium of the medicine-man, be dispersed and thus overcome.¹⁶

That the preparation necessary for assuming this role is too important an aspect of primitive education to be overlooked, is indicated by Pettitt when he makes the following comparison:

A description of modern American education which failed to mention professional training for medicine, the ministry, law, and science would be an analogous omission. The primitive practitioner here designated as an extramundane intercessor served his fellowmen in all these fields and more; and his services were just as indispensable and his technical proficiency as important to aboriginal society as those of the modern professional man are to ours.¹⁷

The Role of the Medicine Man

However, in considering the role of the medicine man in Blackfoot society certain difficulties are encountered.

¹⁶William T. Corlett, The Medicine-Man of the American Indian and His Cultural Background (Baltimore: Charles C. Thomas, 1935), p. 66.

¹⁷Op. cit., p. 105.

Authorities sometimes make distinctions as to the use of the term, applying it in some cases in a restrictive sense to individuals performing particular functions, and at other times using it to refer in a general way to a number of people engaged in a number of different but associated activities. Grinnell, for example, uses the term to refer to the owner of a medicine pipe bundle, speaks synonomously of such an individual as a priest, and limits his role in the treatment of the sick to the offering of prayers for their recovery:

The medicine man administers no remedies; the ceremony is purely religious. Being a priest of the Sun, it is thought that god will be more likely to listen to him than he would to ordinary man.¹⁸

Those actively engaged in treating sickness or injury through medical techniques he refers to as "doctors".¹⁹ It is worth noting, however, that Grinnell states that even these doctors "for the most part effect their cures by prayer. Each one has his dream or secret helper, to whom he prays for aid, and it is by their help that he expects to restore his patient to health."²⁰

McClintock also uses the term doctor, but does so

¹⁸Op. cit., p. 286.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 284.

²⁰Ibid., p. 286.

synonomously with that of medicine man.²¹ In addition, there are authorities who believe that among the Plains Indians there were specialists that might more properly be termed priests.²² These were individuals trained to conduct ritual ceremonies. They knew the sacred songs, dances and proceedings in their correct order and form and assisted at ceremonials to ensure that everything was performed correctly. However, these people were also regarded as being in close communion with the supernatural and "were expected by the tribe to lead straight lives and to be above reproach."²³

That it is possible to make such distinctions with reference to the role of the medicine man is explained by William Corlett:

As might be expected in duties so diversified, all medicine men were not equally capable of performing them. This gave rise to a certain division of labor and also to a certain extent to the existence of what might be termed specialties.²⁴

One such specialist, who performed a priestly function, is described in the following passage:

We found Spotted Eagle reclining on his bed of robes and blankets, fanning himself with a large eagle wing. He was a noted medicine

²¹Op. cit., p. 409.

²²Lowie, op. cit., p. 163.

²³McClintock, loc. cit.

²⁴Op. cit., pp. 81-82.

man, who made a speciality of the Sun - dance ceremonial. He was generally chosen to sit in the sacred booth of the Sun - lodge, to pray for those who came before him. If the man and his wife, who gave the Sun - dance, were not competent to lead in the ceremonial, Spotted Eagle was their paid adviser, to guide them through the long intricate rites. Commanding in person, and with a face indicating much force and strength of character, he had an imposing presence--a most valuable qualification for a medicine man.²⁵

While among the Blackfoot, at times, there were specialists who could more specifically be termed doctors, priests or shamans, there is considerable evidence that an overlapping of these functions existed. This is indicated by McClintock when he describes White Grass the Blackfoot medicine man:

He had good standing as a medicine man, because of his knowledge of ceremonies and his social position. He was skilled in the conducting of ceremonies and handling of sacred bundles. He helped Mad Wolf, my Indian father, with his beaver ceremony; and was called in when any of the family were ill. He had a reputation as a doctor and could treat certain kinds of trouble. His power over disease was believed to have been given him through supernatural experiences in visions and dreams. He was somewhat of a mind reader and mesmerist. He knew how to inspire confidence in his patients, which helped in their recovery. He also knew signs and omens both good and bad, and could tell people how to avoid bad luck.²⁶

²⁵Op. cit., p. 335.

²⁶Walter McClintock, Old Indian Trails (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1923), p. 92.

Catlin expresses the same viewpoint when he states that:

In all tribes their doctors are conjurors - are magicians - are soothsayers, and I had like to have said, high priests, inasmuch as they superintend and conduct all their religious ceremonies; -- they are looked upon by all, as oracles of the nation.²⁷

It is possible to conclude, then, that some medicine men tended to specialize while others were more in the nature of general practitioners. However, despite the differences in emphasis that may have existed with reference to the varying aspects of their role, the most important fact in terms of this study was that the medicine men all had at least one function in common. They were the intercessors for their less powerful fellow tribesmen in all circumstances of doubt or difficulty believed to be under the control of supernatural authority. Such circumstances were, of course, almost infinite in number.

The Education of the Medicine Man

The priest, shaman, doctor or medicine man all acquired knowledge, skill and power which the average layman did not possess. This meant that in various ways these individuals had to receive special training or preparation. They had to receive, so to speak, their professional education.

²⁷Op. cit., p. 47.

Attracting candidates. Candidates for a profession so important in Blackfoot life, were assured through a number of social mechanisms, the most important of these being the public recognition and rewards given to the medicine man. These individuals were granted certain prerogatives of dress, decoration and behavior in addition to the material rewards given them by the rest of the community. For example, one was always expected to pass behind a medicine man, and any loud or boisterous conversation was to be restrained in their presence. If anyone killed game when a medicine man was present, he was given the best meat.²⁸ A medicine man also received a generous fee for any service he might perform. If he was called to doctor a sick person, for his visit he might receive several horses and sometimes a gun, saddle or article of wearing apparel.²⁹ If he was requested to pray or conduct a ritual for any of a variety of reasons, such as for success in a vision quest, he received a generous payment for this.³⁰ In addition to these rewards and privileges Catlin states that:

In all councils of war and peace, they have a seat with the chiefs--are regularly

²⁸Clark Wissler, "The Social Life of the Blackfoot Indians," The Golden Age of American Anthropology, ed. by Margaret Mead and Robert Bunzel (New York: George Braziller, 1960) p. 358.

²⁹Grinnell, op. cit., p. 284.

³⁰James W. Schultz, Blackfeet and Buffalo (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), p. 146.

consulted before any public step is taken, and the greatest deference and respect is paid to their opinions.³¹

That these were means of making the role of medicine man a coveted career by many more Blackfoot youth than could possibly attain it is indicated by Long Lance:

When I was a youngster the ambition of every Indian boy was to be a medicine-man; for this mystic being was, and still is, often more powerful in the tribe than the head chief himself.³²

By attributing high status and material wealth to this position many candidates were stimulated to seek this role. From this group of aspirants the various educative processes selected and trained those who would successfully carry out the related functions.

Training for priestly functions. The candidate who was to function more in the office of a priest was required to possess a retentative memory and a demonstrated interest in tribal legends, rituals and ceremonies. A youth who was to become more of a shaman should experience some outward sign that he was especially favoured by spiritual beings. While the shaman, thus, surrounded his acquisition of the knowledge necessary for his position with an elaborate dramatic byplay, the knowledge accumulated by the priest

³¹Op. cit., p. 47.

³²Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance, Long Lance (London: Faber and Faber, 1956), p. 53.

usually was acquired in more conventional ways. In general, this held true even for such portions of a shaman's knowledge as might be utilized by him in functioning as a priest.

Whenever a medicine man participated in public ceremonies for the general good of the community, he became, in effect, an authority on sacerdotal knowledge and thereby a priest. Ceremonial leaders were performing priestly functions even if they were not termed priests. Frequently, however, they were.³³ They may have been performing these duties because they were recognized as medicine men, but the duties required knowledge other than that associated with their shamanistic practices. This knowledge of song and dance rituals and ceremonial procedures was acquired without marked pretense by experience and specific instructions from those themselves trained in these areas. Thus, a medicine man might be a shaman by virtue of his personal communication with supernatural powers, but at the same time a priest insofar as he had to undergo special training in priestly functions.

Among the Blackfoot, most frequently priestly duties were associated with the "medicine bundle" or "medicine

³³McClintock, The Old North Trail, pp. 298, 410; also Grinnell, op. cit., pp. 266, 277; and Schultz, op. cit., pp. 146-47.

pipe" system. In the ceremonials attached to these sacred objects the owners, sometimes referred to as medicine men,³⁴ were in effect performing priestly functions, and were at times recognized as such. Schultz refers to the owner of a medicine pipe as a "Sun Priest" and relates how he conducted rituals and offered prayers for individual and group welfare.³⁵

The knowledgable aids who assisted in these ceremonies may also be regarded as priests. Evidence of this is frequently found in the literature. McClintock in describing the ritual associated with the beaver bundle, one of the most important Blackfoot medicine bundles, speaks of four priests as being in attendance and relates how they took an active part in ensuring that correct procedure was followed.³⁶ Again in discussing the Crow beaver ceremonial among the Piegan, the same author states that "the priests, assisting Onesta in the ceremonial, were seated by his side."³⁷

Priestly duties were also associated with the conducting of the annual sun dance. Lowie states that "a priest

³⁴Grinnell, op. cit., p. 277.

³⁵Loc. cit.

³⁶The Old North Trail, pp. 94-96.

³⁷Ibid., p. 410.

acquainted with the ritual conducts the Dance, first instructing the pledger in a preparatory tipi."³⁸

In his discussion of this great religious festival Middleton makes a similar statement: "The tribal religious ceremonies are directed by men who have made a special study of things sacred."³⁹

The sacred woman who was giving the sun dance was, herself, performing priestly functions as was her husband who took an active part in many of the ceremonies.⁴⁰ However, it was the specialists who assisted and instructed both husband and wife and in general directed all proceedings, who were the true priests of the sun dance. McClintock is another authority who lends support to this fact. It is worth noting that he refers to such specialists as medicine men:

The Sun-lodge was thus completed and ready for occupancy. In it the entire tribe assembled, during the remaining days of the festival, to witness the ceremonies and dances under the leadership of Spotted Eagle, Bull Child and other medicine men.⁴¹

³⁸Op. cit., p. 178.

³⁹Op. cit., p. 82.

⁴⁰Ewers, op. cit., p. 179.

⁴¹The Old North Trail, p. 310

The method of imparting sacerdotal knowledge and of training individuals for priestly duties was for one who had been trained in this area to pass on his knowledge and to charge for this teaching. In other words, individuals becoming priests purchased initial and subsequent knowledge and privileges. For example, the couple giving the sun dance had to purchase the "costly natoas bundle worth many horses" from the couple who had given the dance the year before. In transferring this sacred bundle the medicine woman of the previous year instructed the new one in the role she was assuming.⁴² As was noted earlier,⁴³ the specialists or priests who instructed and assisted them and in general conducted the ceremonies, were their paid advisers.

In the transfer of other bundles, pipes and powers, this form of direct teaching for a fee was also employed. This is evident in the following description of how one might acquire "horse medicine":

The common procedure for obtaining horse medicine, in the life-time of my informants (both Blood and Piegan), was for a person seeking this power to go to a recognized horse medicine man and offer him gifts of horses, robes, blankets, money or other valuables, along with a pipe saying, "I want some of your horse medicine," and naming the use the seeker wished to make

⁴²Ewers, op. cit., pp. 175-76.

⁴³Supra, p. 140.

of it. If the horse medicine man did not wish to grant the request, either because the payment did not appear adequate or for any other reason, he refused to accept the pipe. Then he sang some of his horse medicine songs to avoid bad luck coming his way because of his refusal. If the horse medicine man accepted the pipe he called all the other members of his village who possessed horse medicine power to a horse dance for the purpose of making the transfer and explaining to the neophyte how to make use of the medicine. If, after receiving the medicine, the recipient should still be doubtful regarding any detail of its use, he returned to the man from whom he had secured the power, made an additional payment and requested further instruction.⁴⁴

Rules, sacrifices, prayers, songs and behavior restrictions associated with many of these "medicines" were so numerous as to make it obvious that no momentary inspiration would equip a medicine man for the practice of a priestly profession. Neither could he readily pick up the required knowledge as a spectator. He had to learn the practice by intense study. In speaking of the transfer of one medicine pipe, McClintock records that:

It took Lone Chief four days to confer upon Wolf Plume the rights of the Pipe-- to instruct him in its care and impart the secrets of the ceremony.⁴⁵

With some of the more important medicine bundles the period of learning could be even longer. With reference to

⁴⁴John C. Ewers, The Horse In Blackfoot Indian Culture (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1955), p. 262.

⁴⁵Old Indian Trails, p. 296.

the rituals associated with the beaver bundle, which may have been the precursor of the sun dance bundle, it is related that:

It required years for a man to learn the several hundred songs of this ceremony, the animals to which each referred, and their proper sequence in the ritual. Consequently, ownership of a beaver bundle was not transferred very often. As a beaver man grew old, he taught the ritual to a younger man so that he could carry on the ceremony after the old man's death.⁴⁶

The famous Blackfoot medicine man Brings-down-the-Sun is recorded as relating how he had to study to acquire the knowledge necessary for priestly functions. His father on his deathbed gave him the sacred "Pipe of the Thunder Maker" and this apparently launched him on his career. He states that:

After my father's death, I came north to live. I became deeply interested in the mysteries of the medicines, which I have continued to study diligently. I was formerly called A-pe-so-mucca (Running Wolf), and am still known to many by that name. But, afterwards, when I became the leader of their Sun-dance, and their instructor in the worship of the Sun, the North Piegiens called me Natosin Nepe-e (Brings-down-the-Sun, literally the Sun Bringer).⁴⁷

⁴⁶Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains, p. 169.

⁴⁷McClintock, The Old North Trail, p. 427.

In addition to his definite role as a "Priest of the Sun", this medicine man also acquired shamanistic powers through a direct communication with the supernatural in a dream.⁴⁸ Here he was given a "medicine robe" to be used, among other things, in doctoring. This is another example of the overlapping of priestly, shamanistic and medical functions in the person of a Blackfoot medicine man. It can be noted, however, that his priestly knowledge was acquired openly by diligent study. In this sense preparation for the medicine man's profession or role was more comparable to modern education than, perhaps, most phases of Blackfoot training. It was largely a process of memorizing a recognized body of knowledge and in this way ensuring its preservation and transmission from generation to generation. Thus, the priestly functions of the Blackfoot medicine man provided a stimulus to education based on intellectual achievement through effort and perseverance without the assistance of a supernatural experience.

Training for the functions of a shaman. On the other hand, the training of a medicine man for the functions of a shaman was characterized by involvement with supernatural

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 430.

traditions. While special training and preparation were necessary, the emphasis was placed upon selection by the spiritual powers.⁴⁹ Some sign of acceptance and favour from the supernatural had to be obtained. This could consist of having visions of greater intensity than other people or it could take the form of some type of psychic disturbance.⁵⁰ An example of the latter type of experience is given by Schultz when he records the Piegan medicine man, Ancient Sleeper's account of how he acquired his power. This individual was subject to some form of seizure or fainting spell and it was while suffering from this disturbance that he experienced a dream in which he received instructions on how to acquire the power not only to cure himself but also to help others.⁵¹

There is evidence that Blackfoot youths were, also, chosen for shamanistic training by some tribesman who happened to be a shaman.⁵² However, even where selection was by some other human being this also implied recognition by the spirits, for the youth had to deliberately seek to obtain power from the supernatural forces through dreams or

⁴⁹Corlett, op. cit., p. 83.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 66-68.

⁵¹James W. Schultz, My Life As An Indian (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1907), pp. 306-16.

⁵²Long Lance, op. cit., p. 53.

trances.⁵³ The common tradition, nevertheless, was that the shaman was chosen by the spirits and entered his profession because he had been instructed by them to do so. The story of Wolf Head, one of the greatest medicine men in Blackfoot history who lived to an old age on the Indian Reservation at Gleichen, Alberta, indicates this fact. This shaman received his first intimation of supernatural power through surviving a storm in which lightening struck nearby, seriously injuring him and killing one of his companions. He declares that his close association with the spiritual world and his life as a medicine man began at that time. He relates:

After they took me back to camp that night I was in great pain. I went off into a dream. Boy Thunder came to me in that dream and said: "I am the fellow that strikes. I am going to make a great medicine-man of you. You will do things that will astound your people. I shall come to you many times when you are asleep, and each time I come to you I shall teach you something new."

As the years passed Boy Thunder kept coming to me when I was asleep, and every time he came he would tell me how to do something that I never knew about before. He taught me all about Indian medicine, and soon I became a great medicine-man.⁵⁴

This traditional emphasis upon the supernatural sources of the skill and knowledge of the Blackfoot shaman

⁵³Corlett, op. cit., p. 66.

⁵⁴Long Lance, op. cit., p. 201.

tends to overshadow the actual training or education that they were receiving for this position. The real knowledge acquisition of the medicine man was in terms of acquired skills and abilities. This was the criteria of his success, that is, how well he could perform the behavior expectations held by the tribe with reference to this position. The dream or vision was merely a culturally patterned explanation accounting for, and lending support to these professed abilities. Any preceding experience of memorable intensity could be recalled to explain these subsequent events. In other words, an individual did not become a shaman or medicine man immediately after having a vision, but prepared and trained for the calling until he was mature and ready to practice. He then used the dream experience to support his claim to the position. Pettitt feels that this experience is most simply explained "as an ex post facto explanation of actual ability and knowledge in terms of a classical tradition that, to the primitive mind, accounts for all variations in human achievement."⁵⁵

Lending support to this conclusion is the fact that an individual did not relate his dream or vision at once but kept it secret.⁵⁶ It was only after long thought that

⁵⁵Op. cit., p. 133.

⁵⁶Schultz, Blackfeet and Buffalo, pp. 148-49, 210, 316, 333; also McLintock, The Old North Trail, p. 247.

an Indian came to the conclusion that he had obtained special power through some supernatural experience. Even then his belief would not be accepted until he had demonstrated the effectiveness of his medicine. That a successful demonstration of one's power was most important is indicated by Catlin's description of the shaman's activities among the Blackfoot:

There are some instances, of course, where the exhausted patient unaccountably recovers under the application of these absurd forms; and in such cases the ingenuous son of the Indian Aesculapius will be seen for several days after on the top of a wigwam, with his right hand extended and waving over the gaping multitude, to whom he is vaunting forth, without modesty, the surprising skill he has acquired in his art, and the undoubted efficacy of his medicine or mystery.⁵⁷

The result of this emphasis upon a successful demonstration was that there were frequently individuals who thought they had power but who were never able to prove it. Speaking of those who made unsuccessful attempts to show the potency of their power Catlin states: "If he failed 'his medicine was not good', nor can he ever be a medicine man."⁵⁸

There is also evidence to indicate that a medicine man having once proven his close communion with the spirits

⁵⁷Op. cit., p. 45.

⁵⁸Ibid.

through a display of his power, would not risk failure by attempting the same feat another time.⁵⁹ There were, of course, a number of cases of individuals who claimed that they had power and then lost it or had it taken away from them.⁶⁰

Thus, while a dream or psychic experience may have given rise to the first suspicion in the individual, or in others, that he was possessed of special medicine and capable of becoming a shaman, this was only confirmed through a successful practice. Probably the most important criteria for ensuring favourable results were intelligence and talent coupled with study and practice. That these were necessary if one was to successfully learn and perform the various functions of a medicine man, is indicated by George Pettitt in the following statement:

From an examination of the type of training that could produce the observed results, it becomes apparent that the preparation of the shaman in his highest development required not only the acquisition of a remarkably extensive knowledge of natural science and empirical psychology, but also a degree of self-control and self-discipline through concentrated meditation such as is seldom exceeded by any professional in modern society.⁶¹

⁵⁹McClintock, The Old North Trail, p. 138; also Catlin, op. cit., p. 157.

⁶⁰Long Lance, op. cit., p. 204.

⁶¹Op. cit., p. 143.

McClintock confirms this necessity for intelligence and study to the successful practice of the Blackfoot shaman with regard to weather predicting:

My own experience and observation have convinced me that the remarkable success of medicine men in predicting weather is the natural result of long training and their habit of constant and expert observation of weather signs.⁶²

Evidence indicates that much of the novice medicine man's training was carried on through a form of apprenticeship. Catlin records that the medicine man was accompanied by a number of boys who remained with him at all times and concludes that these "might have been pupils, whom he was instructing in the mysteries."⁶³

According to Long Lance a medicine man was often chosen in boyhood, at about the age of twelve or thirteen years, by the medicine man of the tribe to become his understudy and finally his successor. He states that the training the boy had to go through was long and tedious, extending over some ten to fifteen years.⁶⁴ The qualities looked for in making the selection of the novice are indicative of the importance attached to natural ability and a favourable relationship with the supernatural:

⁶²The Old North Trail, p. 351.

⁶³Op. cit., p. 126.

⁶⁴Op. cit., p. 53.

The medicine-man picks out some youth in the tribe who has shown extraordinary qualities of mind and body and in the spiritual realm - especially a boy who is a leader among his playmates, who 'gets things' easily and who has a keen understanding of human nature.⁶⁵

The boy's parents readily complied with this selection and gave their son over to the medicine man because "this is about the highest honour that can befall a young Indian."⁶⁶

During the initial phase of the boy's training the medicine man took him to a secluded spot either somewhere on the plains or possibly in the mountains. In the six months or so that they remained there, the youth was instructed in the primary secrets of his mysterious profession. The emphasis was upon making his mind stronger than his body, so that it might dominate the physical. This was accomplished by fasting and undergoing torture without flinching or complaint. When this initial training period was over they returned to camp. Long Lance comments:

When the boy returns from his first trip he looks and acts differently, and he is never the same again to his playmates.⁶⁷

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 53-54.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 54.

⁶⁷Ibid.

This disciplining of mind and body continued on succeeding trips and lasted for about three years. The youth then had to go through a long course in the real skills of his profession. This training included the art of conjuring, or learning to foretell the future and of developing the power to establish close communication with the spirits.⁶⁸ With reference to this phase of the boy's education, Long Lance states:

The boy must go through seven 'tents' of medicine, each tent consisting of a year's course and dealing with a different division of the medicine-man's art. For each tent - which is a teepee - the young man must train a year; then at the end of that year he 'goes through the tent'. That is, the medicine-man erects the medicine-teepee and lays out all the paraphernalia that is to be used, and then for a number of days he sits alone in the teepee and watches the boy go through the various things he has taught him during the year. It is like the annual examination following the white boy's school year, though slightly more weird, perhaps, for we youngsters used to gather around and hear some of the strange sounds which came from his teepee, and they awed us.⁶⁹

After completion of this course, the young man might act as one of the lesser medicine men until the death or some other cause, such as conspicuous demonstrations of power, advanced him to the position of chief medicine man of the tribe.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 55.

⁶⁹Ibid.

Preparation for doctoring. In considering the role the medicine man played in doctoring, it is necessary to understand the Indians' attitude towards sickness and injury. This is well summed up as follows:

The Indian possessed a large measure of common-sense. He knew that many natural conditions would or might affect him adversely. For example, he realized that extreme exposures to heat or cold were injurious, that man needed food and water in order to live, and that certain plants and animals, as well as other men, could easily make him suffer and even cause him to die. Sickness that arose from such causes was often understood and regarded in a sensible manner. Any illness or pain the cause and nature of which was not readily understood or appreciated, was viewed with fear, and appeals to a supernatural agency or power were resorted to.⁷⁰

The result of this attitude was that there was no sharp, well-defined line of separation to distinguish between those who might and those who might not practice the art of healing. Many, especially among the squaws were more or less adept at making poultices and in gathering and using plants and other medicinal substances. James Schultz, for example, relates how he was doctored by an Indian woman when he was suffering from a high fever.⁷¹

⁷⁰Corlett, op. cit., p. 69.

⁷¹James W. Schultz, Blackfeet Tales of Glacier National Park (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), p. 200.

This type of skill was apparently widely diffused throughout the tribe and those who were the most successful gained recognition because of their capabilities. It was this that made it possible for McClintock to refer to the Blackfoot squaw, Snake Woman, as "a celebrated herb doctor."⁷²

However, in the case of a serious illness that did not respond to ordinary treatment, and whose cause could only be referred to the influence of the spirits, a person thought to have the power of curing was called in.⁷³ It was this individual who was believed to have the ability of communicating with the spirits, both good and bad, and of propitiating them when necessary. He could please them through song and dance or use of the rattle and beat of the drum.⁷⁴ His supplications were, therefore, more likely to be heard and answered.

In selecting this individual who was to mediate between the spirits and the sick person those in the tribe who had already established close communication with the supernatural powers were most frequently utilized. The

⁷²The Old North Trail, p. 324.

⁷³Lowie, op. cit., p. 162; also Grinnell, op. cit., p. 283.

⁷⁴Lowie, op. cit., p. 168; McClintock, The Old North Trail, pp. 247-50; Grinnell, op. cit., pp. 284-86; and Corlett, op. cit., p. 98. All refer to the medicine man's power in curing as residing in song, chant and drumming.

owners of the medicine pipes or bundles might be asked to conduct the ritual of their sacred object for the sick person.⁷⁵ On the other hand, a shaman, who was known to have received special curing powers through visionary experience, could be consulted. Speaking of the Blackfoot Corlett states:

The members of the tribe know that for some ailments a certain doctor must be obtained, and that for other ills, different doctors should be called. The power of curing possessed by any one medicine-man is, as has been said, the result of a supernatural revelation of the cure, the formula or ritual part being preserved in the song. One song will be used for a particular disease, and another song will have the power to alleviate another ailment.⁷⁶

As well as treating illness and injury through supernatural intercession, the Blackfoot medicine man could be skilled in actual medical techniques. For example, Long Lance claims that a Blackfoot shaman in treating a broken leg which had knit in such a way as to leave the patient badly deformed, rebroke the leg in two places and straightened it.⁷⁷

In general, the education of the medicine man, be he priest or shaman, included preparation for the task of

⁷⁵Grinnell, op. cit., p. 286.

⁷⁶Loc. cit.

⁷⁷Op. cit., p. 211.

treating the sick and injured. The doctoring functions performed by the owner of a medicine pipe or bundle were closely associated with the priestly knowledge he acquired through a process of memorization under instruction. The shaman's curing powers, as with all his other powers, were related to supernatural sources.⁷⁸ In effect, however, this was another phase of the actual training he received. He was prepared to seek the "medicine" necessary to cure certain afflictions. Once again his recognition as a doctor would depend upon the success he achieved. On the other hand, individuals who acquired actual skill in treating the sick did so through study and practice.⁷⁹

Summary. With reference to the position of Blackfoot medicine man, it is possible to conclude that many individuals were encouraged to enter this profession, or at least were attracted to it, because of its prestige and economic advantages. Many failed to attain this highly specialized role. Success rested on the will to study and the ability to perform successfully.

⁷⁸Lowie, op. cit., p. 162; also Corlett, op. cit., p. 97.

⁷⁹Amelia M. Paget, The People of the Plains (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1909), p. 53.

CHAPTER VI

THE COMING OF THE WHITE MAN

1. THE PRERESERVATION PERIOD

The first white man to visit the Blackfoot may have been Henry Kelsey in 1691-92, on his inland voyage of exploration. While there is some conjecture and speculation as to whether he actually encountered the Blackfoot peoples, it has been accepted as historical fact that he was the first white man to visit the plains of Western Canada. Charles Bell, in a paper read before the Manitoba Historical Society in 1928, states that Kelsey was "without doubt the first white man to penetrate inland from York Factory on the Hudson Bay to the great plains south of the main Saskatchewan river."¹

In the introduction to The Kelsey Papers, Doughty and Martin make a similar comment: "Beyond a doubt Kelsey was the first white man to reach the Canadian prairies and to see the plains Indians hunt the buffalo."²

While there is no very authentic evidence as to the exact identity of the natives he visited, the possibility

¹Charles Napier Bell, The Journal of Henry Kelsey (Winnipeg: Dawson Richardson Publication, Limited, 1928), p. 3.

²The Kelsey Papers, introduction by Arthur G. Doughty and Chester Martin (Ottawa: The Public Archives of Canada, 1929), p. xvii.

exists that Kelsey may have met the Blackfoot in his wanderings.³

The Fur Traders

However, there is no such doubt concerning the fact that in the seventeen hundreds explorers for the fur companies visited the Blackfoot camps and recorded the first information about these Indians in their journals. Anthony Henday was sent out by the Hudson's Bay Company in the summer of 1754 to investigate the extent to which French traders from Montreal were breaking in upon the fur trading rights of the Company.⁴ With a small band of Cree Indians, he travelled southwestward from York Factory to the Saskatchewan, and then westward on foot over the plains in search of the tribes reputed to be rich in the finest furs. He received a friendly reception in a large camp of the Bloods, which a recent student of Henday's travels locates as having been situated about eighteen miles southeast of the present city of Red Deer.⁵

The independent, self-reliant nature of the Blackfoot is evident in Henday's recorded conversations with the Head

³S. H. Middleton, Kainai Chieftainship (Lethbridge: The Lethbridge Herald, 1952), pp. 41-42.

⁴James G. MacGregor, Behold The Shining Mountains (Edmonton: Applied Art Products, Ltd., 1954), pp. 24-25.

⁵Ibid., p. 147.

Chief of the Bloods. Henday told the Indian of his great "White Leader" who had sent him to visit the Blackfoot people and to make friends with them. He invited the Chief to send his young men to Hudson's Bay to visit the "white father" and to exchange their furs and hides for rifles, tobacco, blankets, ammunition, beads, coloured cloth and other items. What he was asking them to do was to change their mode of life and to learn to paddle a canoe and to eat fish and generally to make the long, difficult trip to Hudson's Bay.

The Chief replied that his men were horsemen and not used to canoes or boats. They were eaters of meat and had no liking for fish. Besides the Blackfoot had no need for the white man's goods. On the plains they were never in want of food or clothing as they had the buffalo in great numbers. They felt that they might starve on the long trip to the Bay.⁶ Henday, himself, was forced to admit, "Such remarks I thought exceeding true." ⁷

Again in 1772, the Hudson's Bay Company sent a trader to try to persuade the Blackfoot to bring their furs to the posts on the Bay. Mathew Cocking was no more successful than Henday had been and was convinced that these Indians

⁶Ibid., pp. 159-63.

⁷Ibid., p. 163.

would never be prevailed upon to make such a journey.⁸ They were seldom in want of food and since they wished to retain their independence, they preferred to remain in their own territory.

Commenting on this attitude, one recent authority on the modern Blackfoot states:

That happened nearly two hundred years ago, and I speak from personal experience when I say that the Bloods are just as proud and haughty today as they were then, and that they have lost none of their ancient dignity or demeanour. As a people they have not been conquered, nor have they been totally absorbed into the body politic of Canadian life.⁹

Trading activities on the Saskatchewan. The Hudson's Bay Company officials, as a result of the reports of their agents, became convinced that it was useless to attempt to get the tribes of the upper Saskatchewan, including the Blackfoot, to make the long journey to their posts. If they were to compete successfully with the traders from Montreal, they had to expand into this territory. In 1774 they took the first step in this direction by establishing Cumberland House on the lower Saskatchewan, which served as a base for

⁸John C. Ewers, The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), pp. 27-28.

⁹Middleton, op. cit., p. 42.

upriver trade.¹⁰

William Tomison took charge of Cumberland House and organized trading activities on the Saskatchewan River. He served for thirty-five years and during his service Company posts gradually moved up the river. Oxford House, Gordon House, Edmonton House, Carlton House, and Buckingham House were some of the stockaded log forts which appeared in the Saskatchewan Valley during this period. One historian of the Hudson's Bay Company describes Tomison in the following terms: "He appears to have been the most energetic fur trader in the service up to that time, and carried the title of 'inland chief'."¹¹

However, other white traders continued to actively contend for the Indians' friendship. In 1779 a group of independent traders in Montreal organized the North West Company to enable them to compete more successfully with the powerful Hudson's Bay Company in the western trade. By 1784 they were offering stiff competition in the Blackfoot country and were more than holding their own in attracting the Blood and Blackfoot tribes. James MacGregor writes of this competition:

¹⁰Douglas MacKay, The Honourable Company (Toronto: Cassell and Company Limited, 1937), p. 103.

¹¹Ibid.

Whenever a trader of one company started to build a post higher up the river than his rivals, he was sure to wake up some morning when his fort was only about half finished to find that his competitors had found out about his activities and were making preparations to build within two or three hundred yards of his post. Many times, both posts were enclosed within the same stockade.¹²

The traders were at last firmly implanted in Blackfoot country and, no doubt, looking forward to an extended period of profitable exchange. However, something happened that robbed them of many of their customers. In 1781 smallpox broke out among the Blackfoot. Ewers describes its ravages:

It spread from lodge to lodge. The Indians were helpless in the face of this strange plague. They had no idea that one person could communicate a disease to another. Their medicine men had no cure for it. Frantic, infected men rushed into the river and died. More than half the people perished before the plague was spent.¹³

However, the expansion of fur trading activities continued. When the Hudson's Bay Company sent David Thompson to spend the winter among the Piegiens on the Bow River in 1787, they established friendly relations with this largest of the Blackfoot tribes. His journals together

¹²James G. MacGregor, Blankets and Beads (Edmonton: The Institute of Applied Art, Ltd., 1949), p. 85.

¹³Op. cit., p. 29.

with those of Alexander Henry Jr., one of the famous "Northmen" of the Northwest Company, are a rich source of information with regard to Indian-White relations during this early period.¹⁴ Henry describes the Blackfoot tribes as "the most independent and happy people of all the tribes E. of the Rocky mountains. War, women, horses and buffalo are their delights, and all these they have at their command."¹⁵

American trading activities. The Blackfoot's relatively friendly relations with the white traders on the Saskatchewan, in the early years of their acquaintance, were in sharp contrast to the open hostility expressed towards the American explorers and traders whom they met in the valley of the Missouri River in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. These Indians had made friendly contacts with whites from the North, but from their first encounter with members of the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1806, animosities had developed between the Blackfoot and the American white men.¹⁶ The riches in beaver furs to be found in the unexploited country west of the Missouri-

¹⁴Elliott Coues (ed.), New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest, The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and of David Thompson, 1799-1814 (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1897), 3 vols.; chiefly in vol. II.

¹⁵Ibid., II, p. 737.

¹⁶Ewers, op. cit., pp. 47-48.

Yellowstone junction was a powerful force attracting adventurous white men into Blackfoot territory. Spurred by this motive, the Missouri Fur Company was founded and in 1810 Andrew Henry and Pierre Menard built a fort near the "Three Forks" of the Missouri River. However, so aggressive was the Blackfoot opposition that after one winter more than twenty trappers had been killed and only a few furs obtained. The post was abandoned.¹⁷ Other attempts to establish trading centers in Blackfoot territory also failed and Ewers sums up the situation by stating that:

So great was American respect for the power of the Blackfoot warriors that overland parties of traders were willing to detour to the south on their way to or from the Pacific slope rather than risk combat with these rough-and-ready redskins.¹⁸

It was not until 1830 that the American Fur Company, utilizing former Canadian traders, was able to establish friendly relations with these Indians.¹⁹ In 1831 James Kipp was sent to build the first post for this company in Blackfoot country. He named it Fort Piegan in honor of the first Blackfoot tribe to make peace with the Americans.²⁰

¹⁷Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 56-57.

²⁰Ibid., p. 58.

In 1832 Fort McKenzie was built to replace Fort Piegan which had been burned by the Indians when deserted at the end of the trading season. For fourteen years the American Fur Company traded with the Northern Blackfoot and Blood Indians, as well as with the Piegans, at this fort.

During the late thirties and forties the Americans on the Missouri gained most of the Blackfoot trade, nearly monopolizing that of some of the southern bands of the Piegan. The Northern Blackfoot and the Bloods also came south to trade their buffalo robes, in addition to travelling north to Edmonton to dispose of their small furs to the Hudson's Bay Company.²¹

Impact on Blackfoot culture. The advance of the trading posts wrought many changes in the Blackfoot way of life:

Iron blades were substituted for stone. Guns replaced to a large extent the bow and arrow. Woollen blankets and red woollen cloth became parts of the Indian costume. Coloured beads frequently supplanted dyed porcupine quills. In order to gain more of these new possessions, the Blackfoot began to kill buffalo at a greater rate. To their subsistence needs was added the exchange motive with its waste of key resources.²²

²¹Ibid., p. 70.

²²Lucien M. Hanks, Jr., and Jane R. Hanks, Tribe Under Trust (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), p. 6.

These changes gave the Blackfoot more leisure time to devote to warfare and "they grew strong and confident as they extended their territory. Neighboring Indians and whites alike recognized them as the dominant military power on the northwestern plains."²³

However, an even more subtle significance of these changes is indicated by Ewers:

At the same time Napikwan had gained a precarious foothold in the Blackfoot country. His wondrous were subtly undermining the Indians' vaunted independence, even as the Blackfeet boasted of their power and prowess. The Indians were becoming more and more dependent upon him as they came to regard as necessary those traders wares which they could not make themselves.²⁴

Not only was the independent social fiber of Blackfoot culture being indirectly weakened through a growing dependency upon white goods, but it was also being directly disrupted by other forces originating from the presence of the white men. The effects of liquor, which was one of the chief items of trade, was one of the more important of these forces. Although the use of liquor in the Indian trade had been prohibited by the United States in 1834, authorities

²³Ewers, op. cit., p. 44.

²⁴Ibid., p. 45.

made little effort to prevent it from being transported into Indian country. As a result, in remote Blackfoot territory there was no real obstacle to its sale.²⁵

While liquor was a powerful disruptive force, a more significant influence of the whites upon tribal social life was in the form of disease. Periodic epidemics visited the Blackfoot and carried off great portions of the population.²⁶

By 1850, then, there were still very few white men in Blackfoot territory, and these were chiefly employed in the fur trade. However, by this time the Blackfoot tribes had been trading directly with whites for three-quarters of a century and had become completely dependent upon the traders for many articles which they now considered necessities. These included such things as guns and ammunition, metal tools and utensils.²⁷

Education. As far as education was concerned, the first whites scarcely attempted to alter the lives of the Indians. Most of them were traders and as long as good

²⁵Ibid., p. 70.

²⁶Ibid., p. 29; also John R. Swaton, The Indian Tribes of North America (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), p. 397.

²⁷Ewers, op. cit., p. 71.

profits came in, they had little interest in disturbing the natives way of living.²⁸ Ewers sums it up in the following words:

In any case, the fur traders were not in any real sense missionaries of civilization to the Indians. Few of them had any serious interest in the future welfare of the Indians.²⁹

The result was that:

Decades of association with white traders had taught the Blackfoot little of the real nature of that larger white man's civilization of which the fur traders were but a small part. The presence of fur traders among them did little to prepare the Indians for the full impact of white civilization which was to come when the land-hungry settlers began to arrive a few years later.³⁰

The Missionaries

In this early period, not only traders, but even missionaries made little headway and were in danger when entering Blackfoot lands.

The Jesuits, Father De Smet and his associate Father Nicholas Point, made contact with the Blackfoot in 1846 in Montana. Operating out of Fort Lewis on the Missouri,

²⁸Hanks and Hanks, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

²⁹Loc. cit.

³⁰Ibid.

Father Point attempted to convert the Indians. However, he met with little success and when he left the Blackfoot in 1847 he had baptised only 26 adults and just four of these were men.³¹ It was twelve years before the Roman Catholic missionaries returned to establish another mission among these Indians. In 1859, Blackfoot agent Vaughan assisted the Jesuits in founding a mission on the Teton River. It was moved several times in the next few years and abandoned in 1866 because of Blackfoot hostilities towards the whites. One of the priests, Father Imoda, summed up their achievements by stating that with few exceptions "the state of religion among the Blackfoot is about where it was when they first came under the notice of the white men."³²

In the sixties and seventies men such as Father Lacombe and Father Scollen labored among the Blackfoot in Western Canada. However, "though they attempted to participate in the affairs of these people, they could do little more than talk with them and pray for the dying."³³

The efforts of the Protestant missionaries met with no better success than that of the Catholic priests. A Methodist, Robert Rundle, arrived in Fort Edmonton in 1840

³¹Ibid., p. 190.

³²Ibid., p. 194.

³³Hanks and Hanks, op. cit., p. 7.

to work with the Blackfoot, Assiniboins and Whites. "He made little impression on the adult fullblood Indians."³⁴

In 1856 Elkanah Mackey and his wife established a Presbyterian mission at Fort Benton in Montana. They returned East after a stay of one month.³⁵ It was another thirty-seven years before a permanent Protestant mission was established among the Blackfoot in present Montana.

The Anglicans began mission work among the Northern Blackfoot in Canada, but even here they were nine years in obtaining their first convert.³⁶

This lack of progress is explained by Ewers when he states that:

A wide gulf separated the alien religious symbols and moral concepts of the missionaries from the familiar ones of the Indians. The Blackfoot Indians could not readily abandon the faith of their fathers for this strange new religion.³⁷

The depth of this division is indicated in the following incident related by Schultz as having occurred in a Piegan camp:

³⁴Ewers, op. cit., p. 195.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

While I was in Red Paint's camp, the Rev. Prando, S.J., arrived for a talk with its leading men and asked me to be his interpreter. Soon we were thirty or forty gathered in Red Paint's large lodge, as one after another they told of their sufferings and asked the priest in some way to try to get food for them. He replied that he fully realized their needs and would do all that he possibly could for them. In the meantime he said, they should follow his teachings; having led pure lives, when they came to die, their souls or, as I had to interpret it, "shadows" could go away up in the sky, there to join World Maker (God) and ever afterward live happily. And then concluding, he said impressively: "But mind this: if you fail to live good lives, then, when you die, your shadows will go deep down beneath the ground, down to that bad one, Fire Maker, where he will keep you forever burning."

Followed a long silence, broken at last by Red Paint. Said he impressively: "Black Robe, the whites can do many wonderful things. I doubt not their ability, when they die, to go to their World Maker, far up in the sky. But look at us: have we wings to enable our shadows to fly up into the blue? No. Impossible for us to go up there. Have we claws like the badger to enable us to dig down to Fire Maker, for him to roast us perpetually? No, Black Robe, it is that, when we die, our shadows walk or ride out to the Sand Hills, north of here, there forever to remain. There to hunt shadow buffalo; roast shadow meat over shadow, heatless fires, live in shadow lodges. That, Black Robe, is what awaits us all. And so, I finish."

With that, they all arose and one by one, in silence left the lodge. And sad and worried was the expression of Father Prando's face.³⁸

³⁸James W. Schultz, Blackfeet and Buffalo (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), p. 78.

II. RESERVATION TIMES

The tide of white settlers was relentlessly moving westward and it was only a matter of time before the pressures arising from it were felt in the Blackfoot country. The first treaty with these Indians was negotiated between the South Piegans and the United States government in 1855.³⁹ This made the Blackfoot the last of the Plains People to reach a treaty agreement.

In Canada, two immediate steps were required to transform the land from Indian wilderness to white settlement. The first was the necessity of establishing order in these territories. This task was given to a small, but select, group of men, the Northwest Mounted Police. In 1874 they established their headquarters at Fort McLeod in what is now Southern Alberta. This was a strategic location for their main task, "stopping the Yankee whiskey trade which was having a demoralizing effect on the Indians."⁴⁰

The second necessary step was to formally establish this land as being under white sovereignty. The following statement sums up the approach used in solving this problem:

³⁹Ewers, op. cit., p. 215.

⁴⁰Hanks and Hanks, op. cit., p. 4.

Arbitrary dispossession of a native population was morally offensive, and, seeking to avoid the type of conflict that perennially occurred in the United States, the Canadian government formally distinguished Indian land from land designated for white settlement. The device worked well except for mixed bloods whose claims had no legal support. Hence arose the first Riel Rebellion. In the early seventies treaties were negotiated in Manitoba and the Northwest Territories. By 1877 Whites were ready to enter Alberta. It was the Blackfoot's turn.⁴¹

Blackfoot Treaties

Despite an increasing number of white settlers, Blackfoot life at this time persisted in its traditional patterns, and there was no observable necessity for change. The negotiating of a treaty with Indians, who had permitted few whites to enter their territory, and, who had as late as 1870 planned an attack on Fort Edmonton,⁴² was a mission that Governor Laird and Colonel McLeod could not accept lightly.⁴³

Blackfoot conception of the treaty. Why did the Blackfoot agree to a treaty which dispossessed them of their land and was to alter their lives profoundly? While

⁴¹Ibid., p. 5.

⁴²E. A. Corbett, Blackfoot Trails (Toronto: The MacMillan Company of Canada Limited, 1934), pp. 56-57.

⁴³Alexander Morris, The Treaties of Canada With The Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories (Toronto: Willing and Williamson, 1880), pp. 245-75.

there are a number of possible reasons,⁴⁴ one certainly was the conception of the treaty held by the Indians. The significance of the terms of the treaty, due to problems of translation, was probably never very clear to the Blackfoot. The Hanks' study states that:

Certainly the tribe did not know that "surrender and yield up to the Government of Canada, to her Majesty the Queen and to her successors all their rights, titles and privileges" would mean giving all these buffalo lands to white settlers and settling in perpetuity on a certain designated spot. It was beyond their remotest dream that they should give up the Indian life and become farmers and herders like the whites. They expected rather that life would continue in much the same way with the added benefits of sums of money coming to them every year. During the summer they would continue to range with the buffalo over vast areas, and in winter they could return to this friendly spot for money to buy goods from the traders. The offer of cattle and farm implements did not have much reality, for what possible use could these be to the Blackfoot?⁴⁵

Even in signing this treaty, known as Treaty No. 7, some of the chiefs reflected the Blackfoot spirit of independence. They refused to obligate themselves to the whites by accepting the honors offered, regarding them instead as "tokens of submission."⁴⁶

⁴⁴Hanks and Hanks, op. cit., p. 7.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 11.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 14.

Treaties with reference to education. Prior to the establishment of treaties, any attempted education of the Indians of the Prairie Provinces was entirely in the hands of the missionaries--Roman Catholic, Church of England, Methodist and Presbyterian.⁴⁷ However, each treaty, as it was negotiated, contained a clause obligating the Canadian government to establish and maintain schools on the reserves as soon as the Indians were settled on these lands and expressed the desire to have schools. Treaty No. 7, with the Blackfoot, states this commitment in the following terms:

Further, Her Majesty agrees to pay the salary of such teachers to instruct the children of said Indians as to her Government of Canada may seem advisable, when said Indians are settled on their reserves and shall desire teachers.⁴⁸

The American treaty of 1855 with the South Piegan also contained a clause relating to education. Under Article VIII, the Indians consented to the establishment of white schools, and the government undertook the obligation of training the Indians in these institutions.⁴⁹ The Agreement of 1887 between the United States and the Piegans

⁴⁷Indians of the Prairie Provinces (Ottawa: Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Indian Affairs Branch, 1964), p. 20.

⁴⁸Morris, op. cit., p. 371.

⁴⁹Ewers, op. cit., p. 219.

reaffirmed this government responsibility for the education of the Indians.⁵⁰

Change in the Blackfoot way of life. In the years immediately following the signing of the treaties, Blackfoot life followed the old nomadic patterns. The tribes moved south and east following the migrating herds. However, by the spring of 1881, the last of the buffalo had vanished and the Blackfoot were faced with starvation. Only a few hides and horses were available for trading. A great turning point in Blackfoot history had been reached. It is described in the following terms:

The chiefs deliberated but found no alternative except returning to the reserve. Some could still trade horses, but with the spectre of famine in mind most turned north. So as the last horses with tipi covers and back rests piled high on the travois moved down the bluffs from the rolling prairie to the thicketed flats of the Bow River, the last move of the Blackfoot bands had ended. Henceforth these were the lands where they would have to face the future with planted feet.⁵¹

The significance of the change in the Blackfoot way of life, brought about by the extermination of the buffalo, is indicated in the report given by Horatio Hale to the British

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 306.

⁵¹Hanks and Hanks, op. cit., p. 16.

Association for the Advancement of Science meeting at Aberdeen in September of 1885. He states that:

The change was one of the greatest that could well befall a community. If the inhabitants of an English parish were suddenly transplanted to the centre of Australia, and set down there, utterly destitute, to make a living by some unknown methods of tropical agriculture, they could hardly be more helpless and bewildered than these unfortunate Indians found themselves.⁵²

While the Blackfoot followed a nomadic life it had been impossible for missionaries or government officials to make any real progress in establishing a training or educational program for these Indians. For example, with reference to the South Piegan, in 1861 at the end of the second agent's service no attempts had yet been made to establish schools.⁵³ However, once the Blackfoot were settled on their reservations, educational efforts began in earnest.

Formal Blackfoot Schooling

A detailed analysis of the development of formal schooling among the Blackfoot would be a lengthy study in

⁵²Horatio Hale, Report on the Blackfoot Tribes (London: Spottiswood & Co., n.d.), p. 4. (From the Proceedings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science at the Aberdeen meeting, September, 1885. In pamphlet form in the Glenbow Archives, Calgary, Alberta).

⁵³Ewers, op. cit., pp. 234-35.

itself, and, as such, is beyond the scope of the present investigation. However, it is useful to survey, in a general way, this period of Blackfoot educational history with reference to the province of Alberta. Such a survey may be structured by relating historical developments to various "educational administrative task areas." These are areas of administrative concern vital to the establishment of successful teaching and learning in any school system.⁵⁴

Organization and structure. Among the Indians in Western Canada, early schools were founded by the Christian missionaries assisted by the Federal Government. With reference to the Blackfoot in particular, the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church were the active educational forces. It was due to their efforts that formal schools were established on the Blackfoot, Blood and Piegan reserves at an early date.

One example of the co-operation between church and government was with reference to the founding of industrial schools. In 1879 Nicholas Flood Davin reported on the

⁵⁴Roald F. Campbell, John E. Corbally, Jr., and John A. Ramseyer, Introduction to Educational Administration (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1962), pp. 90-130.

advisability of establishing industrial schools in the Prairie Provinces, following a study of similar schools in the United States.⁵⁵ He recommended that the government contact the various religious bodies in charge of schools with a view to utilizing missionary facilities and personnel for industrial school purposes. He suggested that, as a start, four such schools be established. One of these was to be located in Blackfoot country.

In addition to industrial schools, day schools and boarding schools were the early types of educational institutions established among the Indians of the Prairie Provinces. The day schools were immediately beset by many difficulties and during the 1890's this type of institution was closed in favour of residential or boarding schools, which were regarded as being a better method of obtaining more regular attendance on the part of the children, and, at the same time, of removing the "heathenish influence of their parents."⁵⁶

However, by 1909 thinking about the most effective type of educational institution for the Indians had been modified.⁵⁷ Many held that the conditions which had led to

⁵⁵Indians of the Prairie Provinces, p. 21.

⁵⁶Hanks and Hanks, op. cit., p. 32.

⁵⁷Indians of the Prairie Provinces, p. 23.

the desirability of boarding schools over day schools had changed greatly. Day schools began to make a comeback, but under a somewhat different form. The changes made may be described as follows:

A mid-day meal was provided and, when distances were far and weather often harsh, conveyance between home and school was supplied. Salaries of teachers were raised and small rewards were offered pupils for regular attendance and progress. Footwear and clothing was issued to needy pupils and the regular classroom exercises were enlivened by games and simple calisthenics.⁵⁸

The effect that these changes had on the Blackfoot is indicated by Douglas Gold, who taught school among these people from 1914 to 1934. Gold, who later became a practicing psychologist, states that:

We could not build schoolhouses fast enough on the reservation when the Indians discovered the advantages of sending their children to school. It must not be thought that the white man's readin', writin', and 'rithmetic were the only attractions. There was a hot noon lunch, and there was clothing in many cases. There was even pay for transportation under certain circumstances.⁵⁹

Despite whatever progress may have been made up to this date, the hoped for results from education among the

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Douglas Gold, A Schoolmaster with the Blackfeet Indians (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1963), p. 26.

Blackfoot were far from realized. As one author states:

Yet by 1920 more than a generation of Indians had passed, and despite the decades of exposure to the obvious benefits of white civilization, the inhabitants of the reserve remained largely Indian in outlook.⁶⁰

While the adequacy of the education given through the mission schools could, therefore, be questioned, the Hanks' study states that it seemed to be fairly uniform from reserve to reserve within the province.⁶¹

In an attempt to improve Indian education, a number of organizational changes were made. In 1948 the policy was adopted of educating Indian children in association with other children wherever and whenever possible. The Federal Government negotiated agreements with school boards and provincial Departments of Education for the training of Indian pupils in provincial schools. Attendance at such schools has increased yearly.⁶²

In addition, the supervision of Indian schools was made the joint responsibility of regional inspectors of Indian schools and provincial school superintendents.

In 1957 the Department of Indian Affairs introduced

⁶⁰Hanks and Hanks, op. cit., p. 51.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 117.

⁶²Indians of the Prairie Provinces, p. 24.

the election of school committees, composed of band members, to assist in the management of school affairs on the reserve. These committees were to be concerned with such matters as better attendance, care of school property and the promotion of community cultural and recreational activities. In general, it is felt they have done much to stimulate community interest in schools.⁶³

Going a step further, the Provincial Minister of Education in a recent announcement stated that in the near future Indians will not only be eligible for membership on advisory committees, but will also be permitted to sit on local school boards.⁶⁴ This will be giving the Indians a direct voice in the education of their youngsters.

School--community relationships. One of the biggest problems early educators encountered, was with reference to the attitudes held by the Indians towards the educational efforts of the white men. The parents frequently did not understand the purpose of an education and many Blackfoot were irritated by what they regarded as the effort to take the children away and teach them to be Whites. Schultz

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴"In the Legislature," Edmonton Journal, February 22, 1968.

gives evidence of this attitude when he quotes his friend Tail-Feathers-Coming-over-the-Hill as saying: "The whites take our children from us and teach them false beliefs."⁶⁵

Parents would use any pretext to withdraw their children from these newly founded missionary schools.⁶⁶ Furthermore, this parental opposition to schools was not short lived. Speaking of the Blackfoot reserve, the Hanks' study states that:

Resistance though reduced in fifteen years of contact, ran high, for in 1900 less than 40 per cent of the 129 children of school age attended school.⁶⁷

In 1902 Agent Wilson's report contains the following statement indicating that this problem was still in evidence: "The parents, however, take little interest in educational affairs, and consequently pupils are hard to get."⁶⁸

The extent to which this Indian attitude towards white education complicated the difficulties encountered by the early missionaries, is well indicated by Hughes in her biography of Father Lacombe. She states that:

In 1884 seven years after the treaty, Father Lacombe had completed the

⁶⁵James W. Schultz, Blackfeet Tales of Glacier National Park (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), p. 204.

⁶⁶Hanks and Hanks, op. cit., p. 24.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 32.

⁶⁸"Report of Agent Jas. Wilson, Blood Agency, MacLeod, August, 1902," Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ending June 30, 1902 (Ottawa: S. E. Dawson, 1902), p. 129.

construction of St. Joseph Industrial School at High River near Calgary, and was searching the camps for children untouched by Indian "prejudice", whose minds would be receptive to Christianity. A few parents were induced to part with their children, but a few days later, lonely in their tipis, yearning for the departed child, and preyed upon by gossip about heartless whippings, many an anxious parent went to school to reclaim his child. The first years tried Father Lacombe's patience severely. Not only were his lambs seized from the fold, but they were a wild lot at best. They gulped the proffered food, refused to go to bed at night, "laughed and sang, and with the Indians' power of ridicule made light of the odd furniture." Father Lacombe, angry at the Indians' reception of his work, pleaded with the governmental authorities for suspension of rations of those families that resisted him. He recommended severe treatment for runaways, even to the extent of seeking police assistance in returning them to the schools.⁶⁹

Hughes concludes her consideration of this problem by stating: "Because of the antipathy to white ways it was many years before the parents would allow their children to attend even the day-schools freely."⁷⁰

In addition, a school curriculum concerned with elementary literacy in English, a basic Christian outlook, and white techniques of earning a living produced a marked

⁶⁹Katherine Hughes, Father Lacombe, the Black-Robed Voyager (New York: Moffat, Yard, 1911), p. 289.

⁷⁰Ibid.

discontinuity with the established social patterns of Blackfoot life. The following statement outlines the problem:

Many young men have remarked on the strangeness of the transition from school to reserve life. From a life where days are planned on a background of hours and minutes they proceed to a life with faint temporal structure. The food is strange and appears irregular. Interests of people are no longer guided by duties to God or saint, but by the harsher necessities of earning money. The personal authority of the matron or master is suddenly replaced by a set of maxims under the name of "listening to the words of your father." Aside from school friends a boy is acquainted only with his close kinsmen. Others are remote and strange. When leaving school is complicated by the fact that parents have separated and the households reorganized, the boy may be utterly lost In addition, few techniques taught in school are applicable to making a living on the reserve.⁷¹

Girls were also confronted with a similar situation:

For girls the transition is frequently even more difficult. From the school they enter reserve life practically immediately as a bride in a strange house away from their parents. Washing cloths in a washing machine and mechanical mixing of bread dough ill fits these girls for life in a house without running water or electricity. From the helpful hand of a mother-in-law or a sister-in-law they

⁷¹Hanks and Hanks, op. cit., p. 165.

learn entirely new techniques that are suitable for living in houses and camping in tents.⁷²

Some of the young Indians influenced by their years in school tried to lead a life as much like whites as possible. A few of the Blackfoot even attempted to advance their position by attending technical schools, or by leaving the reserve to attend town schools.⁷³ Despite generally poor preparation in the reserve schools, some succeeded in completing courses. However, all too frequently, the culmination of their efforts was discouragement and rejection by white society. The Hanks' study states that:

Once out of school with certificate in hand there are few opportunities to apply their knowledge. Even should their competence be recognized, Indians, who are supported by tax money, are, according to many whites, ineligible to compete with tax-paying citizens for jobs. On the reserve there is little encouragement to use these resources, for jobs requiring technical skills are filled by white employees. Should a reserve tractor need repairs, the white mechanic is summoned from town. Thus, despite all desires, the young man is rejected by his model.⁷⁴

This situation has resulted in a change in the individual's outlook and a trend back to Indian ways has been

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid., p. 111.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 167.

evidenced. The young Indian finds maximum security on the reserve with people of his own kind and is content to remain here voluntarily segregated.⁷⁵ The Hanks' study explains that this results in:

A renewal of solidarity with the past, the discovery of the true way of life, and the renouncing of an illusion. There is pride in being an Indian and adhering to the ways of one's ancestors. There was little security in striving for white values. As a devotee of Indian ways one gives up the ambivalent position of trying to become a replica of the whites who themselves deny the possibility. A certain psychic relaxation occurs that make the avowed Indian stronger within himself.⁷⁶

Thus, the area of school-community relationships characterized by distrust and lack of communication from earliest days, remains, at the present time, an area of unresolved problems.

Curriculum developments. One of the earliest programs established for the Blackfoot Indians was related to adult education. Farming instructors were moved in to teach them how to build log huts and grow crops. However, this early form of education encountered immediate difficulties. The log huts were pulled down and moved around just like tipis.⁷⁷ The first Piegan to try farming felt

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 149.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 170.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 18.

insecure separated from the camps of his people and soon abandoned the effort.⁷⁸

The Indians' attitude towards farming, that was also offering stiff resistance to this type of instructional program, is explained in the following passage:

In fact, to grovel in the dirt when one was accustomed to riding over it on a fast buffalo horse seemed demeaning. Though the instructors tried to enlist the young men by threats and promises, many were set against it. This was the white man's way of doing things, and they were Indians.⁷⁹

Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance, who lived through this period of transition, reflects the inner conflict this form of instruction presented to the young Indian:

Our day as free rovers of the open plains had ended. A few years later we were on reservations, learning our ABC's and how to hoe with our hands. How this shamed us: to have to work like women, when we had thought that we were going to be warriors and hunters like our forefathers. This manual labour so humiliated us that whenever we looked up and saw any of our old warriors passing, we would lay down our hoes and stand still until they had passed.⁸⁰

The practical emphasis in early Indian educational efforts was also reflected in the program of the industrial

⁷⁸Ewers, op. cit., p. 237.

⁷⁹Hanks and Hanks, loc.cit.

⁸⁰Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance, Long Lance (London: Faber and Faber, 1956), p. 277.

schools. Their purpose was to impart a basic knowledge of animal husbandry and the mechanical trades. In addition the youngsters were to be taught to read and speak English, and instruction was to be given in the elementary studies pursued in schools generally.⁸¹

An indication of the type of program carried on in the early missionary schools is found in the 1903 report of Father J. Riou who was the principal of Crowfoot Roman Catholic Boarding School at Blackfoot Crossing. Referring to classroom studies he states that:

The class-room work consists in reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, geography, drawing, vocal music, & c.; progress is noticeable and does the teachers much credit. The programme of the department had been followed. The pupils speak English and seem to be proud of it.⁸²

In addition, the boys had special hours for manual work during which time they received instruction in gardening and the care of livestock. The girls were taught general housework, such as cooking, sewing, knitting and the mending of clothes. Of course, all pupils received regular religious training.⁸³

⁸¹Indians of the Prairie Provinces, p. 21.

⁸²"Report of Principal J. Riou, O.M.I., of Crowfoot R.C. Boarding School Blackfoot Crossing, Gleichen, August 1, 1903," Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ending June 30, 1903 (Ottawa: S. E. Dawson, 1903), p. 356.

⁸³Ibid., p. 357.

By 1918 the provincially prescribed course of studies was strictly followed in the day schools so that Indian pupils could be prepared for provincial examinations. The report of the Deputy Superintendent General for 1918 contains the following statement:

In the day schools, the course of studies prescribed for the provincial public and separate schools is strictly followed, and, in this way, Indian pupils can be prepared for the entrance examination.

In the residential schools, there is opportunity for a broader education than in the day schools. Particular attention is given to class-room work, and, in addition, the girls are taught domestic science, sewing, etc., while the boys receive instruction in farming, care of stock, and, in many schools, some useful trade.⁸⁴

During the 1930's increased emphasis was placed on manual training and vocational instruction in all types of Indian schools. Gardening, dressmaking and manual skills of all types were stressed.⁸⁵

Following this period there was a growing emphasis on providing the Indian youngster with the same type of education as that given to the white child.⁸⁶ The policy of educating Indians in non-Indian schools whenever possible

⁸⁴"Report of Deputy Superintendent General Duncan C. Scott, " Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31, 1918 (Ottawa: J. deLabroquerie Tache', 1918), p. 23.

⁸⁵Indians of the Prairie Provinces, p. 24.

⁸⁶Ibid.

was an extension of the belief that equal educational opportunities could be provided to all residents of the province through exposure to the same basic curriculum.

Finance. Through the treaty agreements the Federal Government assumed certain financial responsibilities for Indian education. It was Government policy to assist in the construction of school buildings. The extent of the aid given the missionary churches in this task is indicated by Archdeacon Tims in his statements concerning the opening of the White Eagle school on the Blackfoot reserve in 1893-94. He states: "The church contributed \$3,000.00 and the Government \$3,000.00 for the erection and furnishing of this building."⁸⁷

In addition to grants for building a school, it was government policy to provide a sum for the hiring and maintaining of a teacher. These grants were \$300.00 per year when the average daily attendance was 25 pupils or more, and "the rate was \$1.00 per month per pupil for schools with smaller attendance."⁸⁸

As well as an extension of financial responsibility in the provision of schools and teachers, the passing years

⁸⁷John W. Tims, "Calgary's Appeal on Behalf of Calgary's Children of the Plains" (n.p., 1909), p. 10. (In pamphlet form in the Glenbow Archives, Calgary, Alberta).

⁸⁸Indians of the Prairie Provinces, p. 21.

have seen the Federal Government provide a growing amount in other forms of assistance to Indian education. For example, a system of scholarships was introduced in 1957 as a further incentive to capable individuals. The scholarships were awarded on a regional basis to students for university, technical and agricultural courses, teacher training, nursing, social work, music and art.⁸⁹

To assist Indian students attending non-Indian schools, teacher-counsellors were employed. Their stated function was to organize the study programs of such pupils, supervise their studies, give guidance, keep student records and assist the young Indians in making the necessary emotional and social adjustments.⁹⁰

Other forms of assistance offered to Indian students attending schools away from the reservations varied from the payment of tuition fees to full maintenance, depending on the parents ability to contribute to the cost of educating their children.⁹¹

Physical facilities and pupil personnel. One aspect of a consideration of the historical development of

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 25.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

Blackfoot formal schooling relates to the construction of physical facilities and the enrolment of pupils within them.

One of the earliest schools in Blackfoot territory was the industrial school opened at High River in 1884 under the supervision of Father Lacombe. It enrolled thirty boys in addition to ten or twelve girls.⁹² On the Blood reserve, St. Paul's residential school was founded by the Anglicans in 1880, while Father Lacombe established a similar type of Catholic institution in 1893.⁹³

Old Sun boarding school, on the Blackfoot reserve, was build by Archdeacon Tims, of the Church of England, in 1891-92. He also erected the White Eagle school, on the same reserve, in 1893-94.⁹⁴

In 1900 the Crowfoot Catholic school was opened on the Blackfoot reserve.⁹⁵ It was soon found that three schools were unwarranted and Agent J. A. Markle reported in 1902:

There are now two boarding schools on the reserve, against three when my last report was written. The White Eagle and the Old Sun schools, both which were under the auspices of the English Church,

⁹²Ibid., p. 21.

⁹³Middleton, op. cit., p. 56.

⁹⁴Tims, op. cit., p. 10.

⁹⁵Ibid.

amalgamated last September. The Old Sun buildings are now used and the White Eagle building is vacant. The expense of operating two schools with less than forty-five pupils in both was found too great.⁹⁶

Among the North Piegan, it was once again the Church England and the Roman Catholic Church that established boarding schools on the reserve at an early date. In 1902 the report of the Agent states that:

The Church of England and the Roman Catholic boarding schools, in which are forty Indian pupils, still continue with commendable zeal their efforts to elevate the mental and moral standard of the children entrusted to their care.⁹⁷

These early schools were to be the main educative forces among the Blackfoot in Alberta. The Annual Reports of the Department of Indian Affairs report on the progress of these six schools. It is significant to note that no mention is made of any other form of educational institution.

Table I, on page 195, summarizes the data available with reference to these schools for the representative years 1918, 1928, and 1936.

⁹⁶"Report of Agent J. A. Markle, Blackfoot Agency, Gleichen, August 7, 1902," Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ending June 30, 1902, p. 126.

⁹⁷"Report of Agent R. W. Wilson, Peigan Agency, Macleod, August 30, 1902," Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ending June 30, 1902, p. 159.

TABLE I
REPORTED SCHOOLS AND ENROLMENT
ON THE BLACKFOOT RESERVATIONS FOR
THE YEARS 1918, 1928 AND 1936

Reserve	School Denomination	Enrolment		
		1918	1928	1936
Blood	Church of England (St. Paul's)	65	128	137
Blood	Roman Catholic	61	122	152
Blackfoot	Church of England (Old Sun's)	39	79	100
Blackfoot	Roman Catholic (Crowfoot)	46	70	92
Piegán	Church of England (St. Cyprian)	30	36	44
Piegán	Roman Catholic (Sacred Heart)	30	48	58
Total Enrolment		271	483	583

^aCompiled from: Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended, March 31, 1918, p. 90; Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ending March 31, 1928 (Ottawa: F. A. Acland, 1929), p. 60; and Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ending March 31, 1936 (Ottawa: J. O. Patenaude, 1937), p. 59.

While the reported schools remained constant as to number and type, it may be noted that there was a slow but steady increase in the number of pupils enrolled.

By 1936, the Department of Indian Affairs was reporting enrolment according to grade level. It is worth noting that approximately only three per cent of the total school population reported was in the ninth grade. In other words, 18 out of 583 pupils had reached this level.⁹⁸ This is indicative of the fact that many Indian students failed to reach this level before they dropped out of school.

Despite all the administrative efforts that have been made in Indian education this problem has persisted to the present day. While Zentner's study, which dealt in part with Indian students attending the partially integrated high school at Cardston and with those attending a number of denominational residential schools on the Blood and Blackfoot reservations, indicates a rapid rate of change in attitudes among Indians favorable to high school graduation,⁹⁹ the fact remains that only a limited number of Indian youngsters reach the high school level.

⁹⁸Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ending March 31, 1936, p. 59.

⁹⁹Henry Zentner "Attitudes Towards Graduation Among Indian and Non-Indian Students," The Alberta Journal of Educational Research, Vol. VIII, No. 4 (December, 1962).

Table II, based on statistics contained in the Canada Year Book 1965 and 1966, indicates that a significant number of dropouts occur before Indian students reach high school. The marked decrease in the number of students enroled between the grades nine and ten would seem to indicate that the grade nine Departmental examinations are a barrier that many Indian youngsters cannot successfully cope with. It is also worth noting that very few Indian students, in spite of the scholarships offered, go on to further academic or professional training beyond the high school level.

Summary

While the treaties with the Blackfoot provided for the introduction of formal schooling, it was not until the disappearance of the buffalo forced the Indians to settle on the reserves that white administrators were able to begin to implement this type of educative program. It is possible to survey this period of Blackfoot educational history by relating developments to some of the task areas administrative efforts were concerned with. It is found that under the direction of the Federal Government and with the assistance of the missionary churches and the Provincial Department of Education, progress has been made in enrolling Indian youngsters in schools, and in providing them with educational opportunities equal to those of

TABLE II

ENROLMENT OF INDIAN PUPILS IN ALBERTA SCHOOLS
CLASSIFIED BY GRADE OR TYPE OF TRAINING,
SCHOOL YEARS 1962-63, 1963-64

Classification	1962-63	1963-64
	No.	No.
Grade--		
1.	174	255
2.	136	218
3.	154	168
4.	159	185
5.	153	198
6.	165	203
7.	211	243
8.	124	216
9.	134	119
10.	66	77
11.	28	43
12.	42	30
University	2	7
Teacher training	--	--
Nurse's training	3	4
Nurse's aide	4	3
Vocational	15	63
Other	19	23
Not graded	21	218
Totals	1610	2273

^aCompiled from: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Canada Year Book 1965 (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, Queen's Printer, 1965), p. 195; and Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Canada Year Book 1966 (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, Queen's Printer, 1966), p. 214.

their white neighbors. However, school-community relationships have been characterized by a lack of communication and the problem exists that many Indian youngsters drop out of school at an early date. In general, indications are that Indian education in the Province of Alberta is achieving only limited success, and is an area of problems and difficulties.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

I. SUMMARY

There has been a long tradition of thought that has held that the solution to the "Indian problem" in this country, lies in the integration of these Native People into the social and economic life of white society. It has been further held that the key to such integration is formal education.

Whether stated or not, education from this point of view was not just schooling in technical skills. It was education viewed as a vehicle of cultural change, as an agency of acculturation. Functioning in this capacity formal schooling has achieved only limited success. Scholastic achievement of Indian children remains low and their attendance irregular.

What are the barriers that have hindered effective Indian education? While this is a complex question and one that cannot be boldly answered concisely and definitely, it is held that one facet of the answer relates to white society's disregard for the Indian's own habits and desires. These people have, themselves, complained that white educational programs are not paying attention to their ethnic, historical and cultural backgrounds. This fact is especially important when it is recognized that aspects of old cultural

patterns still persist and influence the behavior of the individual.

If a new approach to Indian education is to be developed that will take into consideration the historical and cultural mode of life of the people concerned, a need for knowledge is evident. All the social sciences may cooperate in providing this knowledge, and the task is a big one for the North American Indians were characterized by the presence of many different cultural patterns. Research techniques must be applied to each as being, in many ways, unique.

Orientation to the Study

One such cultural group was the Plains Indians and true representatives of this mode of life were the tribes collectively referred to as the Blackfoot. These Indians had a fully developed culture that successfully perpetuated itself through time. The educational historian can make a significant contribution towards the acquisition of knowledge with reference to these people, by considering the traditional methods utilized to transmit their culture from generation to generation.

Education defined. Education in this regard is viewed not as formal pedagogy but as the entire process by which a culture transmits itself through time, preparing

each successive generation for active participation in the social life of the group.

Basic components of social organization. As education is, itself, culturally patterned, socially regulated and rooted in the social organization of the society, it is necessary before considering the process of education to establish the basic components of social organization on which education depends. For the Blackfoot, as for all societies, there are two such components: (1) a relatively large, enduring social group, sharing a common culture and recruiting new members from the younger generation; and (2) a necessary functional differentiation of occupational roles. Based on these considerations Blackfoot education may be regarded as preparation for group membership or preparation for specialized roles.

Preparation for Group Membership

Preparation for group membership consists of transmitting to the young Indian common components of the culture which present members share and training them to conform with the desired behavior patterns. It is establishing a "likeness" among Blackfoot group members.

The common cultural components constituting the essential elements of Blackfoot education for group membership

were: (1) a common language; (2) common knowledge with reference to both the supernatural and the group itself; (3) uniformity of action expressed through conformity to group norms; and (4) uniformity of emotional attitudes toward important common values.

Language. Of major significance in transmitting all other cultural elements to the individual, is the acquisition of the language shared by the group. All members of a culture come to share common interpretations of the external world and of man's place in it. In other words, they tend to focus on the same elements. What they focus on is largely determined by their language, for a language is more than a means of conveying ideas, it is also a means of categorizing experiences. The events of the "real world" are never felt or reported exactly as they are. There is a selection process and an interpretation in the very act of response. Some features of the external situation are focused on, others are ignored or not fully discriminated.¹

Every culture, thus, has its own characteristic classes in which individuals pigeonhole their experiences.

¹Clyde Kluckhohn, Mirror For Man (Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1961), p. 129.

These classes are established primarily by the language through types of objects, processes or qualities which receive special emphasis in the vocabulary and through the types of differentiation which are distinguished in grammatical forms. Edward Sapir states that, "we see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation."²

It is, therefore, the points of focus determined by the language of the culture that serve as the basis for the social and psychological concepts found in any people.

The Blackfoot learned the values, beliefs and attitudes of his culture within the framework of his native tongue. The spoken word was the chief means of communication among these Indians and they had a reverence for it. However, this applied only to their own language and the Blackfoot held it as "beneath their dignity to learn any other tongue."³

Blackfoot, in common with most Indian languages, was very precise, concrete and oriented to the immediate

²Edward Sapir, Language (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1949), p. 218.

³James W. Schultz, My Life As An Indian (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1907), p. 121.

world around them. It was characterized by an absence of abstractions in it, for a definite mental picture could not be formed of abstract ideas. The Indian could speak of moons or sleeps, but he could not speak of time as an entity in itself.⁴ As a result of his language, then, the Blackfoot lived in a world that was definite and concise. His values, beliefs and attitudes were all formed within this framework. Language, as well as being a component of Blackfoot culture, was the means by which the culture was transmitted to the young.

In addition to language, a number of other means were functioning to ensure that the necessary common elements of group culture were being fostered in the younger generation. The acquisition of common knowledge, uniformity of action and common values was promoted through a number of processes and by a number of educational agencies. All these activities were given direction or focus by the existence of a standard of excellence embodied in individuals. This was the recognized group ideal and it existed for both men and women.

The group ideal. Among the Blackfoot, ideal behavior for men was epitomized in the skilful warrior and hunter

⁴Ibid., p. 171; also Walter McClintock, The Old North Trail (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1910), p. 486.

whose courage and generosity brought honor and security not only to himself, but also to the whole tribe. With regard to women, the group ideal was characterized by skill in feminine crafts, thoughtfulness and consideration for others and the possession of virtue and chastity.

This "group ideal", or concept of what a Blackfoot man or woman should be, embodied in ultimate form the necessary cultural elements to be acquired, and was the focal point towards which the educative processes were directed. Within Blackfoot society there were a number of means used to make sure that the young became aware of, and conformed to, cultural ideals. These means were the educative processes that functioned to prepare the young Indian for membership in his social group.

Imitation. While imitation was significant as an educative device among the Blackfoot, this was not just spontaneous imitation, but stimulated, directed practice with the use of models. A number of psychologically based methods of encouraging imitation of culturally desirable behavior were used. These "social pressures" were techniques utilized by the group to recognize ceremonially and collectively that which was culturally approved and to condemn the reverse. In this regard the Blackfoot employed such things as the public recognition of culturally ideal behavior; the use of group supported praise and ridicule as incentives to

learning; and the correlation of certain privileges with the individual's degree of maturity. Furthermore, models of ideal behavior were provided and attention consciously directed toward them. The ultimate recognition of behavior approximating the culturally ideal was for a man to be made a chief, and for a woman to be permitted to give the sun dance.

Discipline. While rigid physical discipline within the family unit was absent in Blackfoot society, this did not imply that youngsters were allowed to grow up in an undirected fashion. In addition to being stimulated in a number of ways to imitate culturally ideal behavior, the Blackfoot youth were subjected to a number of mechanisms whose function it was to ensure development in accord with approved social patterns. Such mechanisms were in effect disciplinary pressures, and they included such things as the assistance of relatives outside the immediate family unit, the activities of the various societies, and the influence of the supernatural.

Naming. The Blackfoot had also developed naming practices that were a fundamental aid in educating their young and in passing on to them cultural values requisite for group membership. They were an effective means of developing character and promoting personality formation of the ideal type.

Storytelling. Among these Indians storytelling was an important pedagogical device. It played a major role in transmitting tribal knowledge, history, values and way of life. In addition, it lent support to all other facets of the early Blackfoot educational "system". For example, the tribal myths and legends served as an authority for various cultural beliefs and practices which were being taught in other ways.

The supernatural. The supernatural was an integral part of the lives of the Blackfoot People. It permeated all aspects of their life and was utilized in practical attempts to acquire greater assurance of achieving success in the affairs of daily living. In this respect, supernaturalism served the educative function of producing a self-confident, self-reliant member of the group. The Blackfoot felt that the acquisition of the appropriate spiritual power was all that was necessary to ensure that the individual possessed the ability to live up to cultural ideals. The most important means through which the Blackfoot sought spiritual power, namely the vision quest and the acquisition of the guardian spirit, are of educational significance not as types of religious education, but as stimuli to the formation of the culturally desired type of individual.

Preparation for Specialized Roles

Within the social organization that characterized the Blackfoot as a separate cultural group, there was a necessary functional differentiation of occupational roles. There was, of course, a distinction of roles based on sex, but this was tribal wide in nature and served as the basis for general education for group membership. Other roles existed however, that were of special significance and the function of relatively few people. Frequently special education was necessary to qualify individuals to hold these positions.

Proficiency in common behavior expectations. There were, however, people who received public recognition as functioning in a special manner in Blackfoot social life by reason of the fact that they displayed outstanding proficiency in the behavior expectations held for all members of the tribe. The man recognized as a chief, for example, had acquired this position by possessing in an exceptional way the traits deemed culturally ideal for all men. There were also specialists in the skills and crafts learned by all Blackfoot. Specialization, in this instance, was based on the individual's interest and ability in acquiring and retaining the skill necessary to be recognized as a specialist.

Men's societies. Special education for roles that could be functionally differentiated from the expectations

held for society in general would include consideration of the Blackfoot men's societies. These groups served special functions within the tribe, and in preserving and augmenting rituals and passing them on to others, were early educational agencies. They were retaining and transmitting, through actual teaching, knowledge and procedures needed for the performance of specialized functions.

War party leader. Other specialized roles were closely associated with the possession of the necessary spiritual power or "medicine". One such role was that of leader of a war party. The individual must possess strong spiritual power as proven by his successes.

Medicine man. An important consideration in Blackfoot education for specialized roles is the preparation or training necessary for those assuming the position of medicine man. These individuals, regarded as having attained a place of special relationship with the supernatural, performed a number of functions and theirs were probably the most important specialized roles in Blackfoot society. The various functionaries that could be included under this heading, namely priests, shamans and doctors, all acquired knowledge, skill and power which the average layman did not possess. This meant that in a variety of ways these individuals had to be specially trained or prepared for their roles. This was their professional education.

Many individuals were attracted to the position of Blackfoot medicine man because of the high status and material wealth attributed to this position. From these aspirants various educative processes selected and trained those who could successfully carry out the related functions. Probably the most important criteria for ensuring favourable results were intelligence and talent coupled with study and practice. The ultimate test for acceptance was the ability to perform successfully.

The Coming of the White Man

First white contact with the Blackfoot was probably made in the late 17th Century. While there is some doubt associated with the acceptance of this early date, it is certain that explorers for the fur companies visited these Indians in the seventeen hundreds. They found them to be an independent, self-reliant people, reluctant to leave their lands or change their way of living.

The fur traders. To do business with these Indians the traders found it necessary to expand into Blackfoot territory. In Canada they did this by establishing posts on the Saskatchewan River. By 1784 both the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company were firmly entrenched in the Blackfoot country. In the valley of the Missouri River, however, American explorers and traders had a much more difficult time establishing friendly relations

with these Indians. It was not until 1830 that the American Fur Company, using former Canadian traders, was able to set up permanent posts among the Blackfoot. In general, by 1850 there were still very few white men in Blackfoot territory and those who were there were chiefly in the employ of the fur companies.

Changes in the Blackfoot way of life. However, the advent of the traders had brought about changes in the Blackfoot way of life. White implements and weapons were introduced and this produced the growth of the "exchange motive" with its accompanying waste of key resources especially the buffalo; and more leisure time to devote to warfare. An even more subtle change was the weakening of the independent social fibre of the Blackfoot. They became more and more dependent upon the traders for things they came to regard as necessary. In addition, Blackfoot social life was directly disrupted by other forces originating from the presence of the white men. Liquor was one of the more important of these. However, the most significant was disease. Periodic epidemics, of white-introduced-afflictions, carried off great portions of the Blackfoot population.

Early educative efforts. As far as education was concerned these first whites were of little significance. Their interest was in making profits not in changing the Indian's way of life. Any efforts that can be construed as

educational must be attributed to the early Christian missionaries. However, among the Blackfoot, even these men made little progress. The Indians' nomadic habits made conversion attempts difficult and, in addition, the problem of translating Christian concepts and symbols into the Blackfoot language, which contained no equivalent forms, seriously hindered the efforts of these dedicated men.

Blackfoot treaties. As ever increasing pressure from migrating white settlers was applied to the Blackfoot lands, it became imperative that law and order be established and land made available for settlement. The former task was given to the Northwest Mounted Police while the latter was approached through treaty agreements.

The Blackfoot were the last of the Plains People to establish a treaty. In 1855 the South Piegan signed a treaty with the United States government, while in Canada Treaty No. 7 between the Blackfoot and the Canadian government was signed in 1877.

In the years immediately following the signing of the treaties, Blackfoot life followed the old nomadic patterns. Due to problems of translation, the Indians probably did not clearly understand the significance of the treaties and certainly did not conceive of them as something that would radically alter their way of life. It was not until 1881 that the disappearance of the buffalo herds

brought about a significant change in their life habits. Faced with starvation, they returned to the reservations, as established by the treaty, and became wards of the federal government.

While each treaty contained a clause calling for the government establishment and maintenance of schools among the Indians, as long as the Blackfoot followed a nomadic way of life it was impossible to fulfill this obligation. However, once the Blackfoot were settled on reservations educational efforts began in earnest.

Formal schooling. In Western Canada, it was the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, aided by the federal government, that established schools among the Blackfoot. In addition there were types of adult education aimed at providing training in such things as farming techniques.

These early educational efforts were immediately presented with problems. In many cases, what they were attempting to teach ran counter to the established Indian concept of appropriate role behavior. The Blackfoot attitude towards the educational efforts of the white men, was another factor, hindering any real progress. They regarded schooling as an attempt by the Whites to change their children into copies of themselves. Furthermore, the youngsters were being taught false beliefs.

Such a view of schooling resulted in continual difficulty in getting Indian children to enter school and attend regularly. When the youngsters did enrol in school, it was more frequently non-academic provisions, such as food and clothing, that attracted them. This resistance was deep-rooted and indicated the presence of a lasting gulf between the Indian community and white administered schools.

Educational progress among the Blackfoot remained slow. At an early date the traditional subjects such as reading and writing of English, and the study of arithmetic were introduced into the Indian schools. By 1918 the provincially prescribed course of studies was serving as the basis for the educational programs offered to the Blackfoot youngsters. However, by 1920 these People were still largely Indian in outlook. While the number of pupils enrolled in Blackfoot schools increased steadily, the proportionate number who reached the ninth grade was very low. The indications are that many Blackfoot youngsters dropped out of school before reaching this level.

White schooling, however, did have an effect on the young Indians. Those who had been brought up in the schools had become familiar with many of the refinements of white living. They began to desire these things and yet they had no means of obtaining them. There was a marked division

between the school programs and the established social patterns of Blackfoot reserve life. The young Indian was attracted to lead a life as much like whites as possible. However, reserve life did little to foster the way of life taught in the schools. If the youth left the reserve to attempt to establish himself in the white community through further study, he frequently encountered white opposition and hostility. The result was a trend back to Indian ways. Security has been found on the reserves with other Indians and the Blackfoot have been content to remain voluntarily segregated.

Government officials have taken a number of steps in an attempt to overcome this type of problem. The policy of integrating Indian children in white schools was established in 1948. In addition, 1957 saw the Department of Indian Affairs introduce school committees composed of elected band members, whose function it is to assist in the management of school affairs on the reserves. Systems of scholarships and assistance to capable individuals were also established. As a further measure, teacher-counsellors were employed to assist Indian students attending non-Indian schools.

Despite such efforts, progress in Indian education still remains slow. Only a limited number of Indian youngsters reach the high school level and very few go on to

further academic or professional training. Indian education remains an area of problems and difficulties.

II. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Culture may be defined as the social inheritance of a particular group or of an individual. It is the whole of the social tradition of an individual and the group to which he belongs. It would include the material artifacts that a group have at their disposal. It also, however, includes the shared concepts or mental pictures the people have of things, and the motivations or reasons for acting that have significance for these people.⁵

The North American Plains Indians were people who were recognized as sharing common cultural elements. There were also, however, differences, and these were of deep significance. The Blackfoot were, thus, first of all Plains Indians, but they also possessed a sub-culture that was uniquely their own.

The process through which the individual acquires the cultural heritage of his group is termed enculturation. It is the development of the person within the context of his

⁵Kluckhohn, op. cit., pp. 20-24.

culture. Beginning as an infant the elements of enculturation are firmly implanted in the individual and these frequently serve to act as barriers to cultural change. Acculturation, on the other hand, may be defined as the changes produced in the cultures of peoples in continuous contact with each other.⁶

Blackfoot Acculturation

When two social groups differ in complexity, the simpler culture is likely to be more receptive to change than the other. This was the relative status of the Blackfoot and the Whites. The latter has traditionally played the donor's role and the Indians' history is marked by the assimilation of the white man's clothing, utensils, tools and firearms. The Blackfoot, as recipients of these laborsaving aspects of white culture, dropped the ancient types of handiwork and processes of manufacturing except, where emotional attachments led them to retain old forms, for example, in various ceremonials. However, it is necessary to distinguish between acculturation that took place through mere contact of Indians and Whites, and the acculturation that was due to deliberate planning on the

⁶Robert H. Lowie, Indians of the Plains (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1954), p. 194.

part of the governments.

Incidental acculturation. Far reaching results were caused in Blackfoot society simply by the coming of the white men. These extended all the way from the using of canvas for tipis in place of hides, and metal tools instead of bone ones, to the changes in tribal life caused by population shifts due to disease and the disappearance of the buffalo.

As culture changes it is, of course, influenced by what went before. This is the effect of enculturation. The new thing received is received according to the needs, values and beliefs of the receiving people. It may be accepted entirely, partially or for another purpose, but its acceptance depends upon the extent to which it is regarded as useful to the group.⁷ Thus, many of the things introduced by the traders, explorers and missionaries were quickly adopted into the Blackfoot way of life. These changes occurred easily because the Indians desired them and there was no basic incompatibility with the cultural patterns already in existence.

Deliberate acculturation. On the other hand, attempted

⁷David Krech, Richard S. Crutchfield, Egerton L. Ballachey, Individual in Society (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1962), p. 342.

changes that were forced upon the Blackfoot and which were not desired by the Indians encountered stubborn resistance. The general policy of the governments, following the establishment of reservations, was to civilize the natives in the sense of making them literate, English-speaking, Christian farmers like their white neighbors. This goal presented formidable problems. In the first place, the Blackfoot, having been for decades nomadic hunters, did not wish to take up fixed residences. Furthermore, they were not ready to emulate the example of white agriculturists. A serious sociological transformation was involved, for in the "old days" women did this type of work, whereas under the new order the men were expected to do it. At first, then, any men who took up farming were likely to "lose face" and to be jeered at. Programs aimed at developing these skills were seriously handicapped.

This was only one aspect of the introduction of a new social order which broke down the systems of law, government, customs, religion and education on which Blackfoot society had rested. Speaking of the Plains Indians in general, Bailyn indicates the significance of such efforts:

Indian culture endured a severe shock upon its first contacts with the White-man and its subsequent adjustment to his ways. The institutional structures of society which had supported culture on the Prairies and effected its transfer from generation to generation was severely

damaged in the course of contact. The response of first and second generation natives was by no means passive resignation. It was, instead, a desperate effort to maintain the heritage, to retain the civilization they knew. The critical point was the process of transfer, the transmission of the culture to the young.⁸

The Indians were, thus, irritated by any effort that could be regarded as an attempt to take their children away and teach them to be Whites.⁹ In addition, tribal elders frequently used the still very effective mechanisms of praise and ridicule to thwart white efforts at establishing order.

Order had to be kept even though the seasoned warriors taunted their young society enemies who had never gone to war. Smarting from this ridicule, young men secretly gathered at night in remote coulees and set off south. On their return with stolen horses they faced the prospect of arrest by the Mounted Police. Many a tense moment resulted when police sought to round up an offender. The old would say, "We used to do things; we were not afraid of the Mounties. We were strong." As a result, lives on both sides were lost while a young Indian, standing alone on a hill-top, proved his courage by defying the police to bring him to justice. Other forms of defiance that showed courage according to Indian

⁸Bernard Bailyn, Education in the Forming of American Society (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), p. 73.

⁹Lucien M. Hanks, Jr., and Jane R. Hanks, Tribe Under Trust (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), p. 32.

ideas were shooting cattle, stealing whiskey, and disobeying white injunctions to remain on the reserve.¹⁰

Acculturation Through Formal Schooling

As a means of bringing about the desired transformation in the Blackfoot way of life, the Whites forced formal systems of schooling upon the Indians. The result was that the main point of difficulty was encountered with reference to the transmission of culture. Indian educational processes were still operative. However, without regard for these, Whites attempted to transfer educational obligations to formal institutions. These were not concerned with Indian culture, but with Caucasian culture. The means of transfer were not Indian means but white means.

What happened was that a process whose origins lay in the half instinctive workings of an homogeneous, integrated society was disrupted by the impact of white formal institutions. No longer instinctive, no longer safe and reliable the transfer of culture, the whole process of education had become confused and impaired.

Effectiveness of primitive education. How may one judge whether the primitive system of Blackfoot education

¹⁰Ibid., p. 23.

was effective? The anthropologist Melford Spiro states that:

From the cultural point of view the success of the educational system of any society is to be measured by the degree to which it has produced members who are motivated to perpetuate the culture of their society, and by the extent to which it has developed in its members the kind of character that is consistent with the values of that culture.¹¹

That early Blackfoot education was effective is obvious from the fact that it was producing a people who took pride in their way of life, and sought to perpetuate it despite much competition, as well as hostility, from outsiders. It was developing in the young one of the most important psychological characteristics necessary for the survival of any culture, that of a sense of identification with the group.

Group ideals. While the processes of early Blackfoot education were not consciously institutionalized in any form of school system, the Indians were, however, using many educational postulates which educators have formulated with relative precision only in recent times. The ideals of education and those of practical life tended

¹¹Melford E. Spiro, "Education in a Communal Village in Israel," Education and Culture (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 476.

to coincide, and public approval was openly and ceremonially given to the individual who lived up to these ideals, and to no one else. The advice given to the children on behavior was supported by the activities of Blackfoot society.

Under such conditions preceptual teaching was a most effective instrument. Teaching by precept becomes ineffective as an educational procedure when adult society fails to live up to the precepts taught to the children. Blackfoot society, in the main, did live up to the precepts taught to its children and publicly rewarded those who showed distinction in their allegiance to such precepts.

The introduction of white schooling disrupted this firmly established pattern. The behavior ideals being taught in the schools were dissimilar in many ways to those being taught in the Indian community. Here tribal life lent its support to the recognition of the type of individual the Blackfoot regarded as being desirable. The schools' teachings as to what a person should be did not receive this reinforcement from the Indian community. A person who accepted the schools' guidance would likely be regarded as "trying to be like a white man." This was certainly not giving group support and approval to the individual's efforts.

Group participation. Early Blackfoot education had been a community project with all reputable elders participating. Familial and community activities contributed to

the development of the individual and his integration into the social patterns of the group. With the coming of the white men, educational activities were highly institutionalized so that the need for transmitting culture to the younger generation no longer needed to be reflected in the society as a whole. There was a concentration of responsibility for education in school systems with an expected sloughing off of responsibilities by other agencies.

Thus, the imposed reservation system with its formal schooling broke down the traditional Blackfoot method of educating the young. Age old parent-child relationships were disturbed and traditional rewards and beliefs shaken. Bewilderment and insecurity were the result.

The youth was sent to a white administered or integrated school. Here educators, for the most part, completely ignored the culture the Indian child had brought to school with him and tried to develop him into something new. When he graduated from school he went back to his people with concepts that meant nothing to him. In fact, what he had learned frequently caused conflicts in his familial and community relations. These caused him to abandon what he had acquired during schooling. Then all the Indian had left was what he had before he went to school. Indians are sometimes said to be big children. It may be the white men who have made them so.

Enculturation. The point that is frequently overlooked is that a youngster born into any society begins the process of enculturation into that society almost at once. It is not until the Blackfoot child goes to school at the age of five or six that he is exposed to the direct acculturating effects of white society. A great deal of enculturation has taken place in this time.

Educators are faced with two alternatives. The schools can ignore the enculturation that has taken place and attempt to make a fresh start with the individual or programs can be developed where the desired individual growth will be based on the "cultural roots" already established. In the past, the course followed was all too frequently the former. Defining integration as the act or process of making parts into a whole,¹² it would be more proper to refer to many of the efforts of the past in Indian education as attempted cultural substitution rather than cultural integration.

Even at the present time elements are present in the Indians way of life that present barriers to change. This resistance is supported by such things as the Blackfoot's resentment of forced integration. The Indian looks on the

¹²Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Toronto: Thomas Allen, Limited, 1958), p. 437.

reserve as his last rights and freedoms and doesn't want to give them up. There is also the peculiar enculturation found in a repressed minority. They have a sense of their identity and wish to preserve that which is recognized as their way of life. This desire is expressed in one of the statements posted in the Indians of Canada pavilion at Expo 67:

Help us to preserve the moral values--
the meaningful way of life--the inheritance
of our fathers.¹³

It must also be remembered that the Indians are a special kind of minority group. Most other minorities, various ethnic groups for example, came to Canada for a purpose. They wished to become part of the Canadian way of life. The Indian is different. Often he thinks Canada was better when he had the country. He doesn't want to be integrated in the sense that other minorities do.¹⁴ In other words, their motivations are different from those of other minorities in this country.

The imposition of provincial curricula, biased in favor of white, middle class society, has resulted in discontinuity between Blackfoot social life and school life. There has been no carry over from one to the other. All

¹³Edmonton Journal, March 31, 1967, p. 15.

¹⁴Supra, p. 9.

too frequently the schools have ignored the cultural elements already present in the child and have attempted to impose a completely new formation upon him, rather than seeking to develop in the desired direction the "seeds" of his own culture. For schools to meaningfully contribute to the formation of Indian people capable of functioning successfully in white society, it is necessary that a basic correlation between the school as a formal institution of culture transmission and the society it is functioning for be established. This can only be done when recognition is given to the cultural variables influencing the individual's behavior when he arrives at school. School success will depend upon the convergence of the individual's cultural heritage and the educational situation.

Equal Educational Opportunities

Today formal education is regarded as the road to social mobility and economic advancement. The Indian people have been getting equal educational opportunity and yet at the present time they are less able to take advantage of higher education, the high standard of living and the rewards of modern society than other segments of the Canadian population.

The possibility exists that equal education, interpreting equal as meaning the same kind of education,

reinforces the existing differences in educational achievement and through this reinforces the existing social and economic differences. Indian youngsters who are ready to and willing to compete for marks and advancement on equal terms with non-Indian children will benefit from this type of equality, but those Indians who are neither prepared nor willing to enter into this competition will be discriminated against.¹⁵

Total equality is discriminatory. In other words, the total equality long commented upon in Indian education, is discriminatory and reinforces social inequality because education demands that those being educated accept the traditions and values of formal schooling with the accompanying emphasis on the recall of certain specific facts and concepts. Distinctions are made between those students who do remember them and those who do not. Those students who remember their facts and manage to communicate them to their teachers and examiners are rewarded with educational advancement. Those who do not communicate are pushed or dropped out of the educational system. It is frequently argued that this is as it should be, that there is no good

¹⁵Anthony D. Fisher, "On Discrimination, Equality, and Freedom", 1966, p. 2.

reason for trying to educate those who cannot or will not learn.

Special educational opportunities. However, not all students who have learning difficulties are forced out of school. Children who have various types of problems are given special attention. Those who are physically or mentally unable to profit from attendance in a "regular" classroom are given different treatment. Often they are removed from the direct competition for marks and advancement entirely and are allowed to advance independently from the "normal" child.¹⁶

Implications for Indian Education

The Indian youngster is not just like every other child entering the provincial school systems. He may be more "normal" than the physically disabled child but he is still different in other ways.

Language. Most frequently he has grown up in a home where the language is Indian. This is of major significance to educators for as Kluckhohn points out:

Language is something more than a vehicle
for exchanging ideas and information--

¹⁶Patrick J. Quinlan, "The Establishment and Evaluation of Elementary-Junior High School Transition Classes in the Edmonton Separate School System", (unpublished Master's thesis, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1964).

more even than a tool for self expression and for letting off emotional steam or for getting other people to do what we want.

Every language is also a special way of looking at the world and interpreting experience. Con-
cealed in the structure of each different language are a whole set of unconscious assumptions about the world and life in it.¹⁷

How one speaks, then, is a clue to how one thinks. With reference to the Blackfoot there is a concreteness of language and of associated mental concepts. For example, time and numbers have to be applied to something concrete. Difficulties arise when white teachers attempt to talk to Indian children in English using abstract terms. Douglas Gold records an example of this type of problem with reference to a fourteen or fifteen year old Blackfoot girl:

Miss Andrews had difficulty teaching Rosie numbers. Teacher and pupil sadly needed a common language. One evening after Miss Andrews had been attempting to give Rosie an understanding of the value of coins, she came to me. "Mr. Gold I wish I could talk even a little bit of Blackfoot. I don't believe I'm ever going to get Rosie to understand numbers till I can talk to her."

.

I saw that the chairs would be good objects to count so I lifted one of them off the floor without disturbing the yarn.

¹⁷Op. cit., p. 124.

"Rosie!" I said, holding up one finger and one chair. "One--tockskum--one--one chair." Rosie repeated carefully "One chair."

I picked up two chairs after receiving a nod of encouragement from the teacher. "Rosie, natock--natock--two chairs. Two chairs."

Very plainly Rosie repeated "Two chairs", and I was delighted. This was progress in the Horace Mann devices. I picked up three chairs together.

"Neokskum, Rosie, neokskum. Three! Three chairs!" A great light illumined Rosie's countenance. She turned triumphantly toward Miss Andrews, assumed the appropriate patriotic stance for first graders, threw back her head and sang. Oh, how she sang, "Three Chairs for the red, white and blue." ¹⁸

The concreteness of the Indian language, then is an obstacle to education according to the provincial curriculum. However, if the Blackfoot language lacks abstractions, this does not necessarily imply that it has to remain this way. The Indian has a chance to be bilingual and educators have sought to deprive him of this opportunity to have different views of life. They have prohibited the use of Blackfoot in the schools¹⁹ and have forced the youngsters to attempt to communicate in English. This results in the Indian child failing to have a clear picture of white culture or of their own.

¹⁸Douglas Gold, A Schoolmaster with the Blackfeet Indians (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1963), pp. 28-29.

¹⁹Hanks and Hanks, op. cit., p. 163; also Gold, op. cit., p. 78.

Language is normally something that evolves and develops with the culture. The Indians' language has been set aside and their culture acculturated to such an extent the language can no longer cope with it. The children are learning a language in school that is very technical. How can the child take the associated concepts to a home where only Blackfoot is spoken? The Indian language has not been given a chance to develop. There is, thus, a breakdown in communication between the Indian community and the schools.

The implication arising from such a consideration is that Blackfoot acculturation through formal schooling may have proceeded more rapidly and successfully if use had been made of their own language. While practical considerations would hinder the implementation of such a program, the fact remains that both the English and the Indian language could be used together in the primary classrooms. In this way the Indian's own concepts could be used to bridge the gap between the Indian and the English language. Continued use could be made of Blackfoot as a secondary language in the schools. This would allow it to develop the same as any other language. Concepts of a higher level would evolve from the Indian's own life experiences and find symbolic expression in their native tongue.

The Indian is going to continue to preserve and use his language as one of the basic psychological indicators of group identity. Would it not be wise for educators to develop this language into a useful pedagogical tool rather than seek to retard its evolution and in so doing perpetuate a communication breakdown?

Attitudes. By the time the Indian child enters school he will already have acquired many cultural concepts different from those traditionally held by white educators. He will have received his preschool "education" in a community where time schedules are irregular and work habits flexible. In other words, the Indian youngster will have a different attitude towards time and work. Whites live by "time" and frequently regard work as something valuable in itself. The Indian's life was not traditionally regulated by time considerations and work was something that was done when necessary.

The important social and economic world for the Blackfoot child will be close to home and in the present. Many of the things regarded by the schools as important will be of little concern to the Indian youngster. Neither he nor his parents have much interest in the United Nations, deficit financing, mortgage and interest rates, municipal politics, English literature and many of the other things

that educators regard as necessary. These subjects have little immediate relevance to either the Indian's culture or its language.

The Blackfoot's conception of a "good" person would also differ in many ways from the ideal proposed by the white schools. White society holds that people should be competitive, independent and acquisitive. The Blackfoot taught that a "good" person was one who was generous and of service to the group. As a result of this attitude, the Indian will experience difficulty in asking or begging for things. He is familiar with a society that has always valued giving without asking. In other words, "welfare" was expected.

Overlooking such attitudinal differences constitutes a very real problem in Indian education.

Newcomer teachers often take for granted that the Indian children possess those same attitudes which are characteristic of city children and valued by the teacher. Expecting to obtain the same response as they did elsewhere and, doomed to disappointment they may resort to the cliché, "Indian kids simply don't care."²⁰

It is possible, then, to conclude that "what the non-Indian school system expects to find in the 'normal' child

²⁰Stephan M. Gregg, "White Man No Good", Edmonton Journal, April 11, 1967, p. 6.

in terms of attitudes toward time and work, concepts of time and space, ideas about discipline and normal behavior will seldom be found in the 'normal' Indian child".²¹

Discipline. The Blackfoot youngster will have grown up in a home where traditionally corporal punishment is rare and discipline established by a number of agencies aside from the parents. As a result the threat of physical punishment in schools will prove ineffectual and it will be of little use to complain to parents about the behavior of their offspring. If accepted, this criticism would only serve to humiliate or cause them to "lose face", and the powerful force ridicule is for the Indian has been previously noted.

The Hanks' study notes that grandparents and elders are still active in bringing up children.²² Educators might well turn to these traditional disciplinary agents for assistance in implementing the school programs. It is of little use to complain that parents aren't interested in what the child does in school. They are interested,²³ but based on traditional cultural patterns they are not the ones to look to for overt disciplinary support.

²¹Fisher, op. cit., p. 5.

²²Hanks and Hanks, op. cit., p. 153.

²³Henry Zentner, "Attitudes Towards Graduation Among Indian and Non-Indian Students", The Alberta Journal of Educational Research, Vol. VIII, No. 4 (December, 1962), pp. 211-19.

Motivation. The fundamental stimuli of the early educative process, praise, reward, and ridicule, are of basic significance to educational efforts of the present time. It is important, for example, that educators recognize that anything in the classroom activities that causes the Indian to "lose face" or to be humiliated is intolerable to the individual and quickly leads to a total breakdown in the learning situation. Schultz gives evidence of this fact. He relates how a white friend rescues an Indian girl and is wounded in the process. While recovering he attempts to teach her English:

To pass the time, he taught her simple English words, and short sentences. It was really laughable sometimes to hear her mix them up, as for instance, when she would say, "The cow he is water drink." But we didn't laugh, for if we had, there would have been an end to the lessons. Many a promising Indian scholar has been lost by the thoughtless ridicule of his teacher.²⁴

The patterns of group supported praise and reward that were such an important part of the early Blackfoot educative process find little expression in a school system characterized by its separation from the Indian community. Lack of understanding and distrust of school

²⁴ Op. cit., p. 248.

programs results in the Indian youngster failing to receive the supportive recognition of his group for possible achievements he may make in school. In addition to this, the individual may frequently be confronted with a division of allegiance between the rewards the schools stress and those traditionally offered by his people. The possible conflict is indicated in the following statement:

The children themselves, caught in the set of values established by the school, no longer seek the favours that Indian parents give. A lad who has spent twelve years under Anglican or Roman Catholic influence finds it difficult to appreciate the gift of a Medicine Pipe and asks to be spared the honour.²⁵

The problem is complicated by the fact that there are, thus, no behavior models available for the Indian children to emulate. Those that functioned in the old cultural patterns are out of step with the expectations and teachings of the schools. In addition, Indian youngsters who attempt to pattern their lives after white models are frequently confronted with rejection and discouragement.

There is no reason to believe that praise and recognition rooted in the social life of the Blackfoot community could not be just as powerful stimuli in the

²⁵Hanks and Hanks, op. cit., p. 88.

educational activities of the present day as they were in the processes of the past. However, before they may be activated the gulf that exists between white schools and Indian communities must be lessened so that group support may be given to the activities of the school. The committees of band members elected to assist in educational affairs are a step in the right direction. However, the Indian people are still asking for, and must receive, an even greater participation in the educational affairs of their children.²⁶

Leadership. If the schools were preparing Indian leaders who actually would have the chance to look after the interests of their people and contribute in a public way to the welfare of the group, this would once again be providing models of publicly approved behavior for the Indian young to recognize and imitate.

A common complaint is that schools are not preparing Indian youngsters for leadership. It may well be that conditions have existed that have made it impossible for them to do so. There is a generally recognized lack of Indian management of their own affairs.

Indian Reserves, as things now stand,
are not really units of democratic

²⁶The Edmonton Journal, March 31, 1967, p. 23.

self-government. There are trappings of democracy, but very little substance. The real power remains the Indian Affairs Branch and its officers. Band Councils are usually left toothless.

Indian people, through their elected local representatives, have little real power to organize things as they see fit, or gain experience in managing their own affairs.²⁷

The Hanks' study reaches the same conclusion:

In the opinion of the writers there has been too little encouragement of Indian participation in the management of affairs. The agency manages well, but it manages for the Indians rather than in conjunction with them.²⁸

Education can play an important role in this area. However, the education and development of Indian leaders must be a process that extends beyond the school situation into the actual affairs of the community. Those responsible must be courageous enough to permit this extension to take place. It means that in addition to classroom training the Indian will be allowed to develop leadership qualities through the successes and mistakes of actual experience.²⁹

A system that developed leaders acting in the best interests of the group, in the traditional manner of the

²⁷Ibid., April 8, 1967, p. 4.

²⁸Op. cit., p. 145.

²⁹Ibid., p. 146.

chief looking after his band, would restore to these people models of approved behavior for the young to emulate. School studies would come to be regarded as something meaningful to the Indian people. They would be the means through which the youngster could prepare himself to act for his people, and in so doing receive the public recognition and acclaim of the group. This would be restoring the key incentive of status mobility, so important in early Blackfoot educational processes.

Code of conduct. Every society has a code of conduct referring to behavior that is deemed appropriate. This code is not only very important to the culture, it is also very extensive. It permeates every aspect of life. The Blackfoot had theirs and it constituted an important part of their education for group membership. The function of this code is to make living agreeable for all society members. You are regarded as polite as long as you conform to these behavior patterns. People as they are enculturated don't reason out their rules of conduct, they just accept them. Differing from society to society, these hold important implications for educators. For example, with reference to the Blackfoot many frustrations could be avoided by white administrators if they were aware of and accepted the Indian's traditional emphasis on oratory and talking things over. It was regarded as proper behavior

to grant each individual, who wished to do so, the opportunity to speak and for others to listen politely. Gold gives evidence of the Blackfoot's adherence to this form of conduct in his narration of the band members discussing where a new school should be located.

No gathering of Indians would be complete without prolonged oratory, and the afternoon wore on as each man was given a chance to speak.³⁰

The Blackfoot regarded it as impolite to ask a person his name. As it was a direct reflection of his qualities and achievements, telling one's name except on special ceremonial occasions was, in effect, bragging.³¹

Historically the Blackfoot have also considered it as being impolite to approach the topic of business at once. To the Indians this indicated that one individual was not happy to be in the presence of the other. It was proper behavior to speak of other things first or to visit quietly, enjoying each others company, without speaking.³²

Differing in many respects, the white man's code of conduct was deemed by educators as being appropriate for all social relationships relating to the education of the

³⁰Op. cit., p. 50.

³¹George B. Grinnell, Pawnee, Blackfoot and Cheyenne (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), p. 98.

³²Gold, op. cit., p. 31.

Indian young. Irritation and impatience were expressed when conformity with these expectations was not exhibited. This is just another factor contributing to the validity of the statement printed on a large panel in the Indians of Canada pavilion at Expo 67: "The white man's school is an alien land for the Indian child."³³

In an attempt to bring about integration and not substitution of cultural codes of conduct, it might be well to allow the two codes of politeness to function side by side in early school years. The Indian's code of behavior could be accepted and the white man's pointed out as different but not necessarily better.

Stories. The significance of stories in early Blackfoot educational processes also holds implications for present day educational methods. Blackfoot stories could be used in courses in Social Studies or Indian Literature. Their use would enable the teacher to develop "pride of race" in the Indian youngsters through giving them a sense of their own history and identity as true Canadians. It would also greatly facilitate the teacher's efforts to establish secure social communication with the

³³The Edmonton Journal, May 1, 1967, p. 8.

Indian children.

Why couldn't the schools enlist the aid of the older people skilled in the art of storytelling? They are the traditionally respected members of the tribe, and in addition to the actual contributions they could make in the classrooms, their use would also serve to break down the communication barrier that so frequently exists between school and Indian community.³⁴

Summary

Many of those concerned with Indian education in the past, if they have tried to understand the Blackfoot at all, have insisted on doing so only in terms of their own assumptions about life which were taken to be infallibly correct. This provided a faulty basis for dealing with a people different in language, different in appearance and dissimilar in way of life. Aided by the various social sciences, the aims, curriculum and methodology of Indian education should be devoted to providing the native children with the kind of education that will help them to decrease the effects of cultural

³⁴Murray L. Wax, Rosalie H. Wax, and Robert V. Dumont, "Formal Education in an American Indian Community", Social Problems, Vol. II, No. 4 (Spring, 1964), p. 102.

difference, and enable them to compete successfully for educational, economic and social advancement. This education cannot be of the same kind as that of the non-Indian child. It will have to be of a different quality, an education relevant to the individual's life as an Indian.

This implies that educators, whether in Indian schools or in integrated schools, will be presented with the task of being a specialist in acculturation. They should, thus, be professionally prepared for the position. This means that as well as having an understanding of the processes involved, they should make use of all means at their disposal for deepening their knowledge of the culture of the people they are concerned with. The above historical survey of education in early Blackfoot Indian culture attempts to contribute to the cultural understanding of these Native People and, in so doing, provide insights that are worthy of consideration by educators of the present day.

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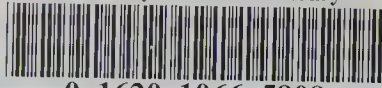
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